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THE APOSTLE OF LIBERTY

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A LIFE OF LA FAYETTE

by

MAURICE DE LA FUYE

and

EMILE BABEAU

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INTRODUCTION

IMMENSELY rich, handsome, a nobleman of ancient lineage, an officer in a crack regiment, recently married to a girl of great family and property with whom, by his own account, he was in love, Gilbert de La Fayette, in his early twenties, worshipping liberty, went to America to fight for the insurgent colonists in their War of Independence against the English.

He went not as a Frenchman, hostile to the English, but because he believed that Liberty could best be served, at that time, by helping the Americans to emancipate themselves from the mother country, and establish that holy thing, a republic. That, at least, is what he claimed; whether or not he is to be believed can be judged from MM. Babeau and de la Fuye's admirably balanced account of his long and extraordinary life. Where did he get his cult for liberty? All one can really say is that it was in the air, and that although his tutor and his school were Catholic, they were far from reactionary.

Gilbert's courage in action, his generosity with his immense fortune, his indifference to hardship and his brilliance as a tactician, earned him Washington's confidence and paternal regard, and the love of the entire American people. His skill and persistence in long-range diplomacy played a very considerable part in winning, for the Americans, that active intervention of the French army and fleet which was essential to their victory. In short, a surprisingly large share of the credit for the creation of the United States must be attributed to this impulsive youth, whose friends were Franklin and Jefferson, Adams and Washington but whose subsequent activities in trying to bring liberty, American style, to France, were regarded by at least one American, Gouverneur Morris, with a jaundiced eye.

If we consider La Fayette's American achievements, and even some passages of his less fortunate life in Europe, apart from the man himself, we appear to be confronted with the work of a

powerful mind, an indomitable will, the highest principles and a flawless character: in short, genius. But bring Gilbert himself into the picture, and it falls to pieces; there is some flaw, some lack of conviction, some indifference to the possible, which makes him, even in his greatest moments, just a little ridiculous—very, very nearly a figure of fun. Was this because, as Chateaubriand, a stern enemy but not an unjust observer, said, “His blindness had to serve him in lieu of genius”? What, in that case, was the cause and nature of his blindness? The answer probably is, *devotion to a principle*, a theory, what we would now call a blue-print for liberty. Like Plato in Syracuse, Gilbert was always tending to make an ass of himself when he put his ideas into action. This becomes perfectly clear in the second, and much longer adventure of his career, the making of the French Revolution, in which he played a large part; and his disastrous failure to control it.

La Fayette was, from its beginning, constantly at the heart of events in the Revolution until forced, by the implacable hatred which his liberalism had aroused in the Jacobins, to disengage the army he was commanding, and fly the country; whereupon, because of the equally implacable hatred it had aroused in the aristocrats and the Austrians, he was shut up for years, in very hard conditions, in an Austrian prison. The authors of his *Life* have shown, clearly, succinctly, and with that touch of humour, of occasional mild irony, which his career does, oddly enough, seem to call for, how, despite Gilbert’s enormous popular reputation, his apparent importance, a situation, an authority, and a control of means which should have made him master of events, his own stern principles time after time ruined his purpose. Three times at least he had France in his hands, and might have imposed his ideas and satisfied his principles. But those same principles prevented him from serving his country effectively. He would not act excepting as the instrument of an abstraction he called The Nation; he could not see that The Nation did not exist, and that it was the leader’s business to create it. He would not be a dictator: unfortunately, neither Robespierre, nor Charles X, had any such scruples.

As a mere boy he had made a god of Liberty, but like so many

devout worshippers, had very little idea of what it was he worshipped: in that respect his life may serve as an Awful Warning; for it is an account of the tremendous difficulties inherent in the task of establishing and maintaining a high degree of liberty for the subject, while still maintaining order, and respect for law.

Octave Aubry wrote of Gilbert: "At heart a republican, by duty a royalist, in fact an aristocrat, he was, despite all his efforts, condemned by his contrasts, throughout his life, to appear an heroic nincompoop." But it is possible to see, now, that his royalism and his aristocracy had little or nothing to do with the case. There seems to be something inescapably absurd, albeit none the less noble, in the spectacle and attitudes of the politician preaching liberty. For the instrument of the politician is the State and the State is—must be—the enemy of every individual's liberty, justified only because it uses the force of all to prevent a few from encroaching upon the liberty of each. At least, it does so in theory. La Fayette, like all liberals, found himself in the somewhat ridiculous situation of having to insist upon liberty by knocking free citizens on the head: he recoiled from it. Napoleon called him "a bit of a simpleton"—presumably for refusing to sacrifice lives which, for Bonaparte, were simply the servants of his own monstrous ego. In any case, it was the simpleton who lived to be nearly eighty and was buried with great pomp by a grateful (if somewhat sardonic) Nation; and the emperor who rotted away on a rock in the Atlantic in the company of an ill-natured bore. Mirabeau said of Gilbert: "—ambitious? His only ambition is to be praised. Greedy for power? He seeks not its substance, but its appearance. . . ." It was a judgment *à la* Mirabeau, one of those "realist" politicians who persist in regarding corruption as a necessary commonplace because he, himself, is dishonest. La Fayette *was* ambitious and greedy—for Liberty and Glory—absurd, no doubt; but endearing.

That he was honest and obstinate in his principles is proved by his life and above all by the hatred of his enemies. He spent his huge fortune without stint in the service of American and of French liberty, indeed of liberty wherever, as in South America under Bolivar and San Martin, it showed its head. His cousin

Bouillé, unable to forgive him because Gilbert, who supported Louis XVI bravely as long as the king behaved "constitutionally", would not support him *against* The Nation, called Gilbert: "An enthusiast, a madman drunk with self-love; . . . the most dangerous kind of man, especially in revolution." It was not self-love Gilbert was drunk with: the stimulant was the Rights of Man, and for that Declaration, indeed, he was prepared to behave, at times, madly enough, as in his innumerable *Carbonari* cloak-and-dagger conspiracies, during the July monarchy. The trouble was he absolutely *knew* he was right: once, at a critical moment in the Revolution, an enemy called him *Cromwell*: but he had certainly never heard of Cromwell's injunction, "I beseech ye, in the bowels of Christ, believe that ye may be mistaken."

This judgment, to which Monsieur Babeau and Monsieur de la Fuye lead us in following Gilbert through the War of Independence, his activities as a Freemason, his work as soldier and politician in the Revolution, his years of prison, his exile and return, his relations with Napoleon and hostility to the Empire, and to the Restoration, his creation of the July Monarchy, his fantastic conspiracies as head of the French *Carbonari*—this judgement is born out by that of his friend and admirer, Mme de Staël: "His confidence in the triumph of liberty is the same as that of a pious man in the hereafter." In short, his confidence, although admirable, was not based on evidence; it was based on blind faith.

Is there anything wrong in that? It is, of course, extremely dangerous and not a little ridiculous: "La Fayette," said his bitter enemy, the ultra *marquis* de Frénilly, "did, in a way, mitigate the horrors of the Revolution, by making it predominantly ridiculous." Frénilly was, clearly, another "realist". Of course, brave, obstinate, rather stupid, perfectly honourable men with a blind faith in liberty and the perfectibility of mankind, *are* ridiculous: they are also the only men who make it possible to civilize man's politics and improve his lot.

Chapter I



THE VOCATION OF LIBERTY

BETWEEN Brioude and Le Puy the high plateaus of Auvergne offer wide spaces to the eye, austere country where mountain winds flog the trees and the meagre grass of the pastures. A remote country where men can lead independent lives in the open air, far, if there be truth in Alfred de Musset's line, from the constraint of cities.

Elle est là, sur les monts, la Liberté sacrée!

Gilbert du Motier de La Fayette was born on September 6, 1757, in the Château de Chavaniac, above the village of that name. His father was the *marquis* Gilbert de La Fayette, his mother Marie-Louise-Julie de la Rivière. At his baptism the child's godparents were his grandfather, the *marquis* de la Rivière, and his aunt, Mme de Chavaniac.

It is curious to read in La Fayette's own *Mémoires* that he was a posthumous child. His birth certificate has been found and, in fact, he was two years old when his father, a colonel in the *Grenadiers de France*, was killed at the battle of Minden, on August 1, 1759, during the Seven Years War.

La Fayette's right to the title of Marquis has been disputed.¹

In point of fact he belonged to the cadet branch of a family whose most distinguished member was one of Joan of Arc's companions whom Charles VII made a Marshal of France. The family was subsequently distinguished by two women: Louise, beloved of Louis XIII—her edifying career was recounted by Mme de Genlis (to save herself from yielding she became a nun

¹ From 1789 onwards La Fayette wrote his name in one word, *Lafayette*, without the *de* or any title of nobility. We have ignored this change excepting in textual quotations where it appears in the latter form.

of the Visitation, under the name of Sister Angélique); and Marie-Madeleine, *comtesse de Pioche de Lavergne*, who, in 1665, married a great-uncle of La Fayette and whose writings, *Zayde* and *La Princesse de Clèves*, revolutionized the art of the novel.

Gilbert had in his veins the blood of two energetic and obstinate peoples; on the paternal side he was an Auvergnat, on the maternal side, through the de la Rivières, Breton. The massive geology of these two regions seems to have conveyed its character to the sturdy and resolute men who are native to them, men who, without neglecting the wide spiritual horizons—Pascal, for example—have always, like La Fayette and Chateaubriand, clung ferociously to their independence and shown a marked preference for opposition.

Gilbert's father's older brother was killed at the siege of Milan in 1733, during the War of the Polish Succession. The boys' ancestors and own family were, then, proud scions of the nobility of the sword who, from early times, were engaged in the business of defending the country as brothers-in-arms of France's Kings. The predecessors of Louis XIV were accustomed to command their armies in person, and could appreciate the courage and military skill of their officers. But these noblemen did not altogether abandon their own estates to live at Court, and, as in the case of La Fayette, returned there from time to time, to recoup their strength and to keep in touch with their own former vassals.

Mme de La Fayette had herself presented at Court in 1762, after her husband's death, and soon became part of the life of Versailles. Twenty-two years of age, she installed herself in the Palais du Luxembourg with her maternal grandfather and her father, the *marquis de la Rivière*. Her object was to form connections which might later be of use to her son. The child was placed in the care of his paternal grandmother and his aunts, his father's sisters, Marguerite Madeleine du Motier and Louise Charlotte (widow of Guérin de Chavaniac), his godmother, whom the child called grandmama.

Gilbert—the name he chose to use out of the six which had been given him, grew up in the Château de Chavaniac, an austere building with a long façade between two towers, without

much character, which had been rebuilt in 1701 following a fire. There he received his early education and was tenderly reared by kinswomen who, by his own account, spoiled him. Those ladies were assisted in their task by the *abbé* Fayon, a learned priest, who laid the foundations of his pupil's education. It would, however, be a mistake to suppose that reactionary ideas were inculcated in the child. The times were lively with speculation and new thought, and the bold doctrines of the *philosophes* reached even the remote provinces. Gilbert's mother showed a penchant for those of the *abbé* Raynal. And may not the ideas of Rousseau have had some influence on the freedom which the child was allowed?

Invoking in his *Mémoires* "his first turning towards glory and liberty", La Fayette wrote: "Even at the age of eight, my heart beat in sympathy with the hyaena which caused some damage and even more rumours in our neighbourhood." To what incident, which appears to have stimulated the imaginations of several biographers, does this anecdote refer? Some suppose that it refers to a hyaena which must have escaped from a menagerie and terrorized the countryside. Another informs us that Gilbert must have tried to demand the publication of a corrected version of a journalist's report which, due to a confusion of names, accused him of having fled from the animal when he could have shot it. In the absence of any exact documentation, all that can be said is that, either alone or in company with a young peasant, by name Desplaces, the child La Fayette ran away and spent several days wandering in the neighbouring woods: "The hope of meeting it [the hyaena] urged me on," he noted. Possibly the animal in question may have been the famous beast which appeared, about 1765, not far from his part of the world, and which was probably no more than an enormous wolf. At all events, the incident, of which the hero seems to have been and remained proud, has given rise to much prose.

A portrait of Gilbert as a child, attributed to Doronais, shows him as being pleasant to look upon, with his hair curled over his ears in the fashion of the time, and a lively expression. He early received the nickname "*Blondinet*" which the Court was later to revive, although indeed his hair was inclined to be red.

Sainte-Beuve, in his *Portraits littéraires*, was to write: "La

Fayette owes the two master traits of his character, his feeling for independence and his poetic heart, to his native Auvergne." He adds, somewhat oddly, "Pigeons, each day, create the idea of wings in his mind." And the forest, according to the famous critic, was "his soul's domain." Love of nature and of liberty, these lessons of his earliest youth were ineffaceable: *Et qui donc a jamais guéri de son enfance?* as Lucie Delarue-Mardrus demanded.

Gilbert was certainly very precocious. His intelligence at the age of ten made a great impression on his cousin the *marquis de Bouillé*; we find, in his *Mémoires*,

Before returning to Paris I went to offer the tribute of my veneration and gratitude to Mme de La Fayette. I spent some days there. I found the young La Fayette remarkably well informed for his age, astonishingly forward in reason and reasoning, and extraordinary for his reflections, his wisdom, his moderation, his cool head and his discernment. Nevertheless, I also found a kind of pride, even ambition, in the child which has since caused the ruin of his country. His preceptor, a former Jesuit [*can this be the abbé Fayon?*], a man of great intelligence, who was using an excellent method in the boy's education, asked me what I thought of him. I told him that I considered the boy to possess the type of mind which belongs to great men, and without which it is impossible to become a great statesman, a great soldier, or great in the fields of thought and judgement. And that if, to these qualities, he could join a vigorous character, he would one day do very great things, provided he were served by circumstances; for it is necessary, even for great talents, to meet with their occasions. I was not mistaken: had La Fayette possessed firmness of spirit, he would have completed the Revolution in France and become its arbitrator and its master.¹

The following year (1768), fortified by country living, Gilbert was taken by his mother to Paris. He lived with her at the Palais du Luxembourg and was entered at the Collège du Plessis, which had been founded before 1322 by a monk of Marmoutiers, Geoffroy du Plessis, and in 1646 handed over to the Société de la Sorbonne.

The *abbé Fayon* continued, however, to direct his pupil's studies, and memories of college play small part in La Fayette's

¹ An unpublished passage, kindly made available by the *marquis Pierre de Bouillé*.

Mémoires. He makes reference, however, to his determination to be independent from the moment he began attending classes: "Arrived at College, I was distracted from my studies by my wish to study without constraint."

Concerning his progress he was modest: "A few schoolboy successes, deriving from my love of glory, but moderated by my love of liberty." He does not fail to recall a piece of homework, an essay composed on a set subject, *Describe the perfect horse*, which all his biographers have made much of. He conceived of the animal as bucking and unseating its rider, the moment it perceived the whip. To consider this composition as a remarkable exploit, product of a very bold mind, would be to exaggerate. Nevertheless, fifteen years later Gilbert declared that had his schoolmasters ordered him a flogging, he had made up his mind to strike the usher with his dagger, or turn that weapon against his own breast. However, the master seems to have been a man of sense, and it does not appear that Gilbert was ever punished.

Who now remembers that, under the old monarchy, education was free almost everywhere and that the children of the people were admitted to the colleges with the nobles? However, there had been great changes in the teaching faculty in 1762, following the banishment of the Jesuits engineered by the *duc de Choiseul*; the hundred and twenty-four schools which they had maintained were closed.¹ Finally, the harsh discipline which permitted corporal punishment had been softened, especially for the upper classes; pupils were becoming more susceptible, and reacting violently to such treatment, a fact attested by Marmontel and Danton.²

Doubtless this liberal tendency, which the historian Norvins calls republican, was accentuated at the time of the American insurrection, for he notes that "intoxication with the idea of glory" which exalted his contemporaries and "especially the name of La Fayette, our old schoolfellow, who, like us, had worn the college uniform, a sort of *dalmatique* of serge, sleeveless, and worn over one's clothes". These details give a very clear idea of the nature of this college, directed by priests with real breadth of mind. True, when they left school, class distinctions between

¹ Albert Babeau, *La ville sous l'Ancien Régime*, Vol. II., p. 311.

² Albert Babeau, *Les bourgeois d'autrefois*, pp. 288-91.

ex-pupils reasserted themselves; but when, under the Terror, the college became a prison, filled by Robespierre, not a single noble victim was imprisoned on the denunciation of an old schoolfellow of the lower classes.

The boy Gilbert, then, found himself in a congenial atmosphere at the Collège du Plessis. Later he was to write that "nothing had displeased him at college but his dependence". Yet he, who was still a schoolboy, was about to enter upon a military career, a career which, above all others, calls for discipline. As a gentleman of ancient stock, La Fayette was received, April 9, 1771, when he was thirteen, into the Second Company of the King's Musketeers, a *corps d'élite* known as the Black Musketeers because of the colour of their horses. He still remained in college, only leaving it on the occasion of regimental reviews, when he would put on the superb uniform of scarlet cloth and the great blue cloak ornamented with a silver cross. Subsequently, his military education having been entrusted to a former officer, Margelay, he completed it at the Versailles Military Academy. He had already put himself in touch with Jean-Paul François de Noailles, *duc d'Ayen*, and in April 1773, the *duc* having asked for him, he joined the *Régiment de Noailles*.

Meanwhile, in April 1770, Gilbert had lost his mother. His grandfather, the *marquis de la Rivière*, survived her by only a few days.

"His death", La Fayette recorded in his *Mémoires*, "made me rich, who was born poor." The inheritance assured him an income of a hundred and twenty thousand *livres*.¹ Henceforth he must be considered what is called a good match. The *duc d'Ayen* had five daughters and La Fayette took pleasure in the company of that family, their breadth of mind being congenial to his own. Had not a Noailles, brother of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Paris, who had distinguished himself by his charity during the harsh winter of 1709, shown great gentleness, as governor of Languedoc, during the suppression of the Calvinists following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes?

Adrienne, second daughter of the *duc d'Ayen*, meeting Gilbert at the Hôtel de Noailles, or on parties of pleasure, felt drawn to-

¹ £6,000 gold; say £50,000 a year at present money values.—*Trans.*

wards him, while her elder sister, Louise, developed the same sentiment for her cousin, the *vicomte* de Noailles. But two obstacles interposed between Gilbert and Adrienne: the first was the girl's age, fourteen years. The second concerned Gilbert. Mme de Lasteyrie, Adrienne's daughter, was later to write in her *Life* of her mother: "A great fortune, and all at his own disposal, which my mother regarded as an added danger."

Needless to say, this second objection was readily overcome. As to the first, it was finally decided that there should be no question of an engagement for Louise until a year had passed, while Adrienne must wait eighteen months.¹

On April 11, 1774, in the chapel of the Hôtel de Noailles, the marriage of Gilbert and Adrienne was celebrated by the *abbé* Paul de Murat, La Fayette's cousin on his father's side. The bridegroom was sixteen and a half years of age, the bride fifteen and a half.

Presented at Court and a Black Musketeer, the young *marquis* had, on March 26, 1774, received the usual honours and privileges—the right to a carriage, and freedom to hunt. In May he was obliged to leave his wife and betake himself to Metz, where his father-in-law's influence had obtained for him a company of the *Régiment de Noailles* on condition, however, that he would not take over the real command, as a captain of cavalry, until he reached his eighteenth birthday. He was not to return to the Court until September. The young couple, while residing in Paris, were much at Versailles, where, in May 1774, the *duc* de Berry had succeeded to his grandfather, carried off by the small-pox. The youthful officer was by no means the perfect courtier. He was to write in his *Mémoires*: "The awkwardness of my manners, while not out of place during great events, did not enable me to stoop to the graces of the Court, nor to the airs of a supper in the Capital."

A romanticized biography by Delteil would have us believe in an idyll, between La Fayette and Marie-Antoinette, at Trianon; another work tells us that Gilbert fought a duel with an English lord who (but his words would surely have been a mere

¹ *Vie de Madame de La Fayette*, by Mme de Lasteyrie, p. 42, and Charavay, p. 4-

echo of La Fayette's own) had spoken spitefully of the Queen. It would appear that these legends want substance, but another anecdote has more verisimilitude: Marie-Antoinette is supposed to have said to him, during a ball, "I shall dance with you no more, you are too clumsy!"

The wife of this Alceste was no Célimène, despite the charm of her face; she was a serious-minded young woman who proposed to shape her life according to her convictions and was not to make her first Communion until 1775, after having rid herself of her religious doubts.

The Noailles had from the first taken Gilbert to their bosom, as a son, and their influence must have strengthened his own convictions. It was the epoch when the ideas of Rousseau—more or less misunderstood, for the Genevan philosopher was very far from preaching the supremacy of the common people—had conquered high society. Apart from Beaumarchais, very much in fashion and read by La Fayette as soon as he left college and at the same time as *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, he was a great admirer of the *abbé* Raynal, a native of the Rouergue and whose *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* appeared in 1770. The work was inspired by the *encyclopédistes*, exalted their principles and, with all the violence of Diderot himself, attacked despotism and religion, while, even thus early, praising the Americans.

The ravages wrought by smallpox in society are well known: Louis XV had been one of the victims. In September 1774, on his return from Metz, La Fayette had himself inoculated against it, at Chaillot, which gave him the chance to appreciate Adrienne's care and attention early in their marriage. After his recovery the couple took their part in the diversions of the Court, which, since the new King's accession, was enjoying what was to be a last outburst of careless gaiety. It was not, at that time, customary for a husband to spend all his time in his own home. La Fayette, surrounded by a band of young noblemen, Ségur, Guéménée, Coigny, La Rochefoucauld, Dillon, and accompanied by his brother-in-law Noailles, was one of the joyful group which gathered to sup at the *Epée de bois* restaurant in Paris, on the right bank of the Seine, in the Porcheron quarter. Originally they foregathered simply to amuse themselves. On

one occasion they did a parody of the Assembly of the *Parlements*, making fun of their impotence in the face of the Executive. Maurepas, worried at this revival of the spirit of the Fronde, carried an account of the affair to the King. That easy-going monarch was still laughing over it on the following day. Gilbert was far from being the life and soul of these parties. Ségur, in his *Mémoires*, described him thus: "La Fayette always maintained, and especially when he was young, a cold, grave bearing which even suggested, quite falsely however, embarrassment and timidity." It is for this reason that his having, on one occasion, drunk too much champagne is cited as a notable exploit. The anecdote is to be found in the correspondence between Mirabeau and the *comte* de La Marck. Gilbert had to be taken home in a carriage, persistently reminding his companions to tell his brother-in-law how much he had drunk.

How much significance should we attribute to a dispute which, according to Ségur, broke out between himself and his friend over the *beaux yeux* of a lady whose name is not given, and that was to have led to a duel which, however, did not take place? Again, in Bachaumont's *Mémoires Secrets*, we are told that the *marquis* was in love with the *comtesse* d'Hunolstein at the same time as the *duc* de Chartres, and that "unable to win her his disappointment drove him into the arms of the '*Insurgens*', so that, indirectly, she became the principle of his fortune and his glory." The story goes that not until his first return from America did Mme d'Hunolstein show herself less cruel. Bachaumont even heard a rumour that there was a child of this union.¹

Chroniclers are very ready to believe gossip hawked around by a man's political enemies.

Not all the time spent at the *Epée de bois* was given to amusement. It would hardly have been possible for such ardent young men, with their passion for new ideas, to avoid political discussions in the course of their meetings. But, still more significant than any such discussions, it appears that La Fayette was present at a Masonic lodge meeting as early as December 1775. There are no details of this meeting, but if we may believe the German historian Findel,² the Grand Master established a

¹ Vol. XIII, p. 35.

² *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, Vol. I, p. 238.

lodge, *La Candeur*, in Paris, which was subsequently to be devoted to the interests of the *duc d'Orléans*, and which included numerous members of the high nobility. La Fayette was one of them, as were the *duc de Choiseul*, the two princes of Hesse, the *prince de Broglie*, Custine, Lameth, and others. It should be recalled that the establishment of lodges, few at first, began in England in 1717, four of them constituting themselves into a Grand Lodge and electing a Grand Master.¹ The vogue of English ideas, and their influence, having long been on the increase, freemasonry's first converts were among the *élite*, the nobility, as much from snobbishness as from sympathy for its ideas.

Nor did Pope Clement XII's condemnation, deriving from the argument that healthy, sound principles need not hide their light under a bushel, put a stop to this movement, which was Protestant in its origin. In January 1781, Marie-Antoinette was to write, "Everyone belongs to it."

It is amusing to recall that, according to Cloquet, who knew Gilbert, "candour was La Fayette's predominant quality; it gave its even tone to every act of his private life."

Writing in his *Mémoires*, La Fayette says, "I was delighted with republican connections, and when my new parents obtained a place for me at Court, I did not hesitate to displease when it meant preserving my independence." The place in question was an appointment to the household of the *comte de Provence*, the future Louis XVIII, who, less elegant and less brilliant than the *comte d'Artois*, was, like him, to make the royal task difficult by his attitude towards the King, his brother.

Gilbert cleverly contrived to avoid what he did not consider to be an enviable favour. In the course of a masked ball he recognized the *comte de Provence* beneath the domino which was supposed to render him incognito, accosted him, and talked to him in terms which, although there exists no exact account of them, must have been very displeasing and subversive. Spiteful by nature, Provence appears to have told him, "I shall remember your words," and never to have forgiven him.

There was, then, no question of advancement for La Fayette

¹ A. Lantoiné, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie française*, E. Noury, 1927.

at a Court of which, as he subsequently wrote to the *bailli* of Ploen, "[I observe] the grandeur and polished manners with contempt." There remained nothing for him to do but follow his military career in the *Régiment de Noailles* at Metz, where a certain dinner (August 8, 1775) was about to decide his future.

Chapter 2



THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE LA FAYETTE—VOLUNTEER OR ENVOY?

It is more or less a commonplace to say nowadays that the years 1774-76 mark a turn in the history of the world. A conflict, economic in origin, between the British colonies in North America and their mother country was to give rise to a nearly world-wide revolution.

The great flare-up of hope which greeted the accession of Louis XVI was not of course anti-monarchic; yet it implied a threat to the old order. Privilege was being questioned and the *Social Contract* becoming a new evangel. Masonic lodges and learned societies were making it their credo, whence it acquired a quasi-supernatural character which made its propagation all the more effective. The freemasonry of the eighteenth century was not atheist but deist. Nevertheless, although it admitted that a supreme being presided over human destiny, its religious notions were essentially different from those taught by Christianity. God was no longer the whole object of life and the recompense of faith kept and duty done, but the remote conductor of a concert; and the performance was to take place here below.

It was, then, and despite its realist origins, a religious revolution which was being prepared. Was a man a freemason because he was liberal and egalitarian? Or egalitarian and liberal because he was a freemason? The problem is not yet resolved; what is certain is that the movement was growing, intellectually and politically, both in Europe and across the Atlantic, where, since Choiseul, France had been sending a stream of secret agents against the hereditary enemy, whose success had been confirmed by the peace of 1763.

Yet was not England's victory, which cost France Canada, a Pyrrhic one? Choiseul, apparently, had believed it to be so, and

may even, it would appear, have contributed to make it so. Between 1757 and 1759 *The Letters of Montcalm to his Cousin de Berryer* were being read, and contained questions like the following:

"Why is the English government trying to conquer it (Canada)? Once that country has fallen under British domination, the other English colonies will become accustomed to no longer considering the French as their enemies."

Clearly aimed to set England and her colonies at cross-purposes. Choiseul's comment, after he had signed the cession of Canada, is significant: "We have them at last!" he had said, speaking in English. And, in fact, the cession removed from across the frontier a hostile power whose presence might well have prevented the colonies from breaking with their mother country.

While thereafter the only enemies whom most Englishmen could perceive across the Atlantic were the Indians, a few, the wiser, were of Choiseul's opinion. They would have preferred to leave Canada to the King of France and take, instead, "the Islands"—that is, the Antilles, whose defence the Royal Navy could always have assured. The suggestion was made, indeed, but not acted upon. But Franklin, landing in France first in 1767 and again in 1776, found a "climate" very favourable to the purpose of his negotiations. His auxiliaries were Silas Deane, a Connecticut merchant, and Arthur Lee. In the meantime the French government had sent Achard de Bonvouloir to Philadelphia in order to keep in touch with the corresponding Committee of the Congress, through the offices of the French bookseller Daymons. A long-term policy upon the nature of which the *comte de Chambrun* throws much light in his *Vergennes*.

Meanwhile Boston had replaced whist as the fashionable game—innocent games no doubt, although some managed to ruin themselves playing them. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* was much discussed. It appeared as a brochure, and was in the form of questions and answers very cleverly designed to forward the cause of independence. For example:

"A child, fed on milk, keeps in good health. Does this mean he should never be given meat?"

Franklin was in the fashion through ignoring fashion in his

clothes and manners. One day he forgot to put on his wig before receiving a delegation; he was almost cheered! Thenceforth he ceased to wear it. He lived frugally in a small house in Passy. The philosophical *salons*, where he appeared in his fur cap and spectacles, competed for his company. He was so completely in the style of Rousseau! And it was whispered that he was thinking of marrying the widow of Helvetius. His book, translated into French as *La Science du Bonhomme Richard* in 1773, went into eight editions between 1777 and 1780. He embraced Voltaire in public—an encounter which became the object of endless acclamations. His scientific discoveries, notably the lightning conductor, were turned into symbols:

*On l'a vu désarmer les tyrans et les dieux!*¹—premature, at least as regards the tyrants. By and large he proved himself to be an excellent diplomat, since he ended by obtaining exactly what he came for: a loan, arms, and an alliance.

For the time being Vergennes was continuing Choiseul's policy with prudence and method. He was willing to help the English colonies, but not to the point of going to war. He recruited and supplied technicians, but under the rose, while a "stooge" business house, *Hortez and Company*—a reassuringly foreign-sounding name, was set up to receive the funds to be used in buying contraband of war. And a mission—in some respects a comic opera affair (but, then, was not the author of the *Barbier* residing in London?)—was sent to recover Louis XIV's secret papers from the *chevalier* d'Eon—the adventuress who wore male attire and played the swordsman.² Lord Stormont, the British ambassador, pretty well informed by his spies, demanded an explanation, to be informed by Vergennes, of course, that there was no question of the French government doing anything of the kind.

Yet it was not Franklin, nor any of his countrymen, who were to decide La Fayette's career, but an Englishman, King

¹ "We have seen him disarm tyrants and gods!"

² The *chevalier* d'Eon's sex was never decided during his lifetime, part of which was lived as a man, unofficial diplomat, spy and swordsman, part as a respectable elderly lady. Examined after death, he proved to be male. —*Trans.*

George III's own brother. The Duke of Gloucester was "pro-American", he proclaimed more than once that the insurgents were right to refuse to pay taxes which had not been voted by their representatives. He converted the *comte* de Broglie, governor of Metz, who had invited him to dinner. Among the guests was a young officer of the town garrison. It was a notable favour for a mere captain to be invited to the table of a marshal in the company of a prince: but La Fayette was the son of the *comte*'s old friend, who had died in his arms.

The conversation was concerned with the Declaration of Independence, brought over by Arthur Lee. Ignoring etiquette, Gilbert asked eager questions. Broglie himself did not absolutely dismiss the idea of an expeditionary force, provided he was in command of it. But that was impossible for a man of his consequence while France remained officially neutral.

La Fayette quickly came to a resolution: he would join the insurgents. He confided in Broglie who, although sympathetic in his heart of hearts, endeavoured to reason with him: "I saw your uncle killed in the Italian war, and your father at Minden, and I do not want to contribute to the ruin of the only remaining branch of your family."

Vain moralizing, preached as a sop to conscience. That attended to, Broglie became the young man's guide and ally in his adventure, showing, as La Fayette was to write later, "a paternal tenderness". He put him in touch with baron von Kalb, a German in the service of France, and formerly Choiseul's agent in America. Kalb spoke English: he was to play the part of interpreter between La Fayette and Silas Deane, recruiting agent for the Congress.

For there were already volunteers, although of a quality open, indeed, to criticism. As La Fayette put it later, "We sent the Americans old guns which were hardly used, and officers who were hardly useful." Exception must be made, however, in favour of a dozen or so technicians, such as the *chevalier* de Kermorvan, who proclaimed that he asked for nothing until he had proved his mettle; two Poles, Pulaski and Kosciusko, well-known patriots; an Irishman, capable but ambiguous; Steuben, a Prussian and an organizer. The rest were, for the most part, adventurers, greedy for rank and money, ready to earn them by

a few showy actions, no doubt, and claiming the right to important commands although ignorant of English. Washington was hostile to this shower of commissions being poured out upon foreigners, and Deane was showing himself very cautious in making promises on his government's behalf. However, he had never yet had to do with a candidate like this one, an enthusiast, apparently disinterested and turning up at a most critical time. Washington had hardly any army left—barely three thousand men being hunted by the English General Howe. Shortages of everything, desertions, financial collapse. The morale of the Union's agents was at its lowest; they advised Gilbert against carrying out his project.

His reply: "Hitherto you have seen nothing but my zeal. It may possibly be useful. I am going to buy a ship to carry your volunteer officers. One should show one's confidence, and it is when danger threatens that I wish to share your fortune."

At the end of the interview Deane promised him rank as Major-General.

The secret was kept in a way which is all the more miraculous in view of the fact that, not wishing to be listed as a deserter, the *marquis* had himself temporarily retired on account of an imaginary illness (June 11, 1776). His service papers vouch for this. It is pertinent to wonder to what degree he was helped by official complicity. From the public point of view he took certain precautions. He did not visit Franklin, confining himself to correspondence through the intermediacy of Carmichael, an American who was "less well known", as he said with a certain simplicity. Carmichael advised a feint: let La Fayette immediately carry out a project, which it was dangerous to postpone any longer, of visiting England. Accompanied by his kinsman the *prince de Poix*, Gilbert set off for London.

The first visit he paid was to the American doctor Bancroft, the second to the King, George III, to whom he was presented by the *marquis* de Noailles, the *duc d'Ayen's* brother and French ambassador. He attended a ball at Lord George Germain's, minister for the colonies, where he met Lord Rawdon, just back from New York. He lunched with Lord Shelburne, who was, in any case, on the side of the insurgents, and rubbed shoulders with General Clinton at the opera; he was to meet him again in

a very different scene. He did not, of course, speak of his project, but did anything but conceal his sympathies. Not wishing to stoop to the rôle of spying, he refused to visit ports, embarkations of troops, or anything else touching the war against the "rebels". These reservations must have been sufficiently revealing to those who had eyes to see. Meanwhile, on the Continent, his preparations were proceeding: Boismartin, Broglie's secretary, went to Bordeaux to buy a ship on La Fayette's account; she was a heavy vessel, armed with two wretched cannon and a few light guns. Her name? Forgotten, for her new owner immediately renamed her *La Victoire*.

From England Gilbert wrote to his father-in-law, whom he called his "cher papa", to inform him of his project; an imprudence difficult to understand and which entailed the risk of ruining everything.

I have found a magnificent opportunity of learning my trade. I am an officer in the army of the United States of America. My zeal for their cause and my candour have gained me their confidence. For my part I have done what I could for them, and their interests will one day be dearer to me than my own.

He had been three weeks in England and the time was come to act. He persuaded the ambassador to believe that he was possessed by an irresistible desire to return to France for news of his wife, pregnant with their second child, although he had been in no less of a hurry to cross the Channel in the other direction so short a time before. Did M. de Noailles really believe him? It was put about that La Fayette was ill, and could see nobody, a fiction to cover him until he returned.

He embarked incognito, arrived in Paris and went to earth at M. de Kalb's, a friend whose discretion was professional. He put himself in touch with the Americans and a few of his intimate friends. Ségur tells, how, one morning when he was still in bed, Gilbert burst into his room, closed and locked the door, and sat down on the bed.

La Fayette: I'm leaving for America. Nobody knows, but I'm too fond of you to go without telling you my secret.

Ségur: And how are you managing it?

La Fayette: I've bought a ship, which is waiting for me at

Bordeaux. I have a commission as major-general in the American Army in my pocket and here is the list of my companions, picked out by the *comte* de Broglie. Ternant and Valfort are the most capable.

Ségur: I'm coming with you.

There was the same approach to Noailles, the ambassador's nephew, and the same promise. But the respective families would not give them permission, and as the two young men had no personal fortune they were forced to give up the project while their friend, rich and his own master, got away to Bordeaux, saying over to himself the motto which he had decided to adopt and which he added to his arms: *Cur non?*

Gilbert had talked too much, especially in London, and Lord Stormont protested against the activities of American agents. Maurepas did not want the serenity of his old age—he was seventy-five—disturbed. As for the *duc* d'Ayen—he flew into a rage. But then, he was not in the swim, and was at once assured by ladies in the highest society that if he opposed his son-in-law's plans he need not hope to marry his other daughters. The police, however, were put on the alert. When he arrived in Bordeaux, La Fayette learned that a warrant for his arrest had reached there ahead of him.

Without waiting, he took his ship to Passages, a Spanish port where it could not be seized. Then, outwardly submissive as *Ségur* and Noailles, he returned to Bordeaux. Maurepas having entrusted a diplomatic mission to Sicily to the *duc* d'Ayen, Gilbert was to join his father-in-law at Marseilles and go with him. They would visit Italy: no more question of America, war, or the conquest of liberty.

Two travellers did, accordingly, enter a post-chaise which set off for Provence. They were La Fayette and a new recruit, the *comte* de Mauroy. But at the first stage they vanished. A little later a very handsome courier was seen galloping past the stage-coach bound for Bayonne. At Saint Jean-de-Luz this courier stopped to rest—in the stables on a heap of straw as was fitting. To him entered suddenly the postmaster's daughter, who started, astonished. She recognized him, having seen him a few days before on his way back from Spain. She did not betray him.

To complete the picture, *La Victoire*, sailing from a Spanish port, carried papers showing her bound for the Spanish colonies, with a call at the Antilles where, without any doubt, the minister would have sent orders to arrest the ship.

The ship sailed on April 26, 1777. "Not a very long voyage," La Fayette wrote to his father-in-law; "people frequently make longer journeys merely for pleasure."

The time required for the Atlantic crossing depended, in the mythological language of the day, upon the goodwill of Æolus, and the passengers had a great deal of time on their hands. True, there was sea-sickness to occupy their attention, as La Fayette confessed in his first letter to his wife, adding, however, that having treated himself by his own method (he does not give the recipe), he was cured before the others.

A few incidents. At forty leagues from the coast a small vessel was met with. Action stations and decks cleared for action. The stranger was an American, but *La Victoire*, a clumsy sailer, soon lost sight of her. Then two English frigates were sighted, but distantly; there was no contact made with them.

The captain proposed to follow the usual course, with a halt at the Windward Isles. Followed an acrimonious exchange, La Fayette incontinently proclaimed that the ship was his property and that at the least resistance to his orders the master would be degraded to second-in-command. At the same time, guessing the master's motive—fear of losing his cargo—La Fayette guaranteed its value, \$8,000, out of his own pocket. The Isles were avoided.

There was a worse danger: British privateers. *La Victoire* could not out-sail them, being slow; nor fight them, having virtually no armament. But rather than strike their colours it was resolved to blow up the ship. Gilbert had preparations made for this by a sailor with a murky past, a Dutch national who, if captured, was in any case sure of being hanged.

The crossing was heavily monotonous. La Fayette thought of Adrienne: he had abandoned her very light-heartedly just when she would have most need of his support. He tried to console her in a letter, showing that, had he obeyed the authorities, he

would in any case have been forced to leave her, "wandering about Italy and dragging out an inglorious existence among people radically opposed to his projects and ideas". These reflections did not save him from experiencing "a dreadful moment as we drew further away from the land". That is not hard to believe; nor is his boredom: "the sea is so melancholy, and I believe we have a mutually saddening effect on each other", which is not badly put.

"You will admit, my heart, that the business and life which I am bound for are very different from those for which I was destined in that futile Italian journey. Defender of that liberty which I worship, utterly free in my own person, and going, as a friend, to offer my services to the most interesting of Republics, bringing to the service only my candour and goodwill, without ambition or ulterior motive. Working for my own glory will become working for their happiness. I hope that, for my sake, you will become a good American; it is a rôle fitted for virtuous hearts. The happiness of America is intimately involved with the happiness of all humanity; for she is destined to become the safe and sure respectable sanctuary of liberty."

"Farewell; darkness prevents me from continuing, for I have forbidden all lights in my ship since several days ago. You see how prudent I am become! Farewell then! Since my pen is guided by my heart I have no need of light to tell you that I love you and that I shall always love you."

A charming letter even if it was only half-sincere; this twenty-year-old husband was a master of the art of gilding even the bitterest of pills. And a revealing letter, too: "The happiness of America is intimately involved with the happiness of all humanity." It smells of freemasonry. But was there anything so odd in that? They were, so to speak, all freemasons in those days—in France, England, and America. A singular society: all its members professed the same ideals and the same principles, and were about to fight among themselves in the name of those principles and ideals.

At last, on June 13, *La Victoire* dropped anchor off Georgetown, in South Carolina. One of La Fayette's biographers tells us that as they set foot on American soil La Fayette made his companions swear to conquer or perish with the young republic.

This spectacular oath, then, was the beginning of a glorious career.

La Fayette's first host was Major Huger, who lived well beyond the town. It was midnight when the party arrived at his house and the dogs greeted the intruders with furious barking. There followed explanations, then a few hours' sleep. This was no more than a brief halt, for, in haste to announce his safe arrival to his wife, La Fayette wrote to her at the same time as he set off again, on a French ship bound for Charleston. Thence he was to go overland to Philadelphia and the army.

It is necessary to grasp what these journeys entailed; the proportions of the country had nothing in common with those of Europe. The war zone—fifteen hundred miles of country as the crow flies; at least four times that figure if we take into account the contours of the coastline, and the islands. Charleston to Philadelphia—more than two hundred leagues; Philadelphia to Boston—one hundred and twenty and rough going. La Fayette's cabriolet was soon useless—with its springs broken: he continued on horseback; it was a negligible check. His attention and interest were caught by the vast scale of everything, of the rivers and forests; and, above all, the character of the people. They "are all brothers"—"The richest man is on the same level as the poorest. Every citizen has a decent property and the same rights as the most powerful landowners in the country." That contrast which had so greatly shocked him in France, the contrast between the haves and the have-nots, and, worse, between noble and commoner, was unknown here. It did not occur to him that this might derive from the circumstances—a virgin country with unlimited resources; his admiration was indivisible and he had no doubt that this ideal régime was applicable to all humanity, beginning with the kingdom of Louis XVI. He was plunged into a positive euphoria, yet he was not deprived of his prudence; he repulsed the advances of various adventurers, the "scum of the islands", who endeavoured to join up with him, and to insinuate their prejudices. He confined his dealings to the six foreign officers, his companions. At Charleston the party had been entertained to a grand dinner by the American generals Gulden and Moultrie, and they were counting on

receiving, in Philadelphia, a welcome proportional to their goodwill.

Fifteen years later another French visitor was to visit this same stretch of country, covering much less ground and describing it at much greater length and, incidentally, with all the charm in the world. He was to pay less attention to the white man than to the natives, and finally to hasten back to Europe, there to fight for his King, but against his country, turned republic. But his fate, also, was to be influenced by the young American republic, although, indeed, very differently: and the name of the *vicomte* François-René de Chateaubriand was to be no less celebrated than that of "General Lafayette", voluntarily stripped of title and *particule* by himself, who had inherited them from his ancestors.

At Philadelphia he went at once to deliver his papers to Mr Lovell, president of the Foreign Affairs Committee. The following day he went to the Congress, beginning by waiting about, with his friends, in the street. Lovell at length put in an appearance, but only to inform them that there was no chance of their request to fight being granted. The puritanical Americans had been disgusted with the recruits already sent them by Deane. They were up against an absolute ban, a fact confirmed by a number of members who came out to speak with them.

La Fayette refused to retreat before this blow of fate. He suspected that the Congress had not been made acquainted with the letters he carried. He wrote a note to Lovell and begged him to be so good as to read it to the Assembly:

After the sacrifices I have made for independence, I consider that I have the right to ask two favours: that of serving without pay, at my own expense; and that of serving as a volunteer (that is to say, in the ranks).

The style was a novelty and the Congress was struck by it. Despatches from Deane and Franklin, belatedly opened, had a decisive effect.

La Fayette was to make immediate use of the prestige thus accorded him; he obtained a solatium for those of his companions not accepted by the Congress.

The English fleet, with eighteen thousand men, had left New York and had been sighted off Cape Delaware. The brothers Howe had joined forces. And Clinton, at New York, was also preparing to attack. Confronted by these threats Washington, leaving his second-in-command Putnam on the North River, crossed the Delaware with eleven thousand men and camped near Philadelphia. It was then that La Fayette was presented to the great American leader, at a dinner attended by a number of Congressmen. Were they, as has been believed for more than a century, immediately drawn to each other? On the contrary, it seems that the *marquis* (according to a document among his own papers but not discovered until 1825), already disappointed by the attitude of the Congress, was even more so by "the stiffness of the general-in-chief who received him with haughty courtesy". There is a contradiction here, to be resolved later.

First impression of the troops: "About eleven thousand men, poorly armed and worse clad, presented a singular spectacle; there was every kind of garments, often none at all, the best being the *hunting shirts* of grey canvas commonly worn in Carolina." Tactics were rudimentary, drill unnecessarily complicated.

"We are bound to be embarrassed", Washington said, "at showing ourselves to an officer coming straight from French troops."

To which La Fayette replied: "I am here to learn, not to teach."

The Commander-in-Chief's real embarrassment had nothing to do with letting La Fayette see the weakness of his army, but derived from the question: how to employ the young Frenchman. In his perplexity he wrote to the Congress, that either he had completely misunderstood what he had been told about the *marquis de La Fayette's* nomination, or that it was La Fayette who was mistaken, perhaps because the Congress had not explained itself clearly enough. La Fayette had, Washington wrote, left him in no doubt that he took his rank seriously and expected to command a division. And that while La Fayette did not fail to speak frequently of his youth and inexperience with becoming modesty, he allowed it to be seen that he expected to be entrusted with a task equal to his rank as soon as Washing-

ton was satisfied concerning his capacities. "Meanwhile", the Commander-in Chief admitted, "he does not appear unwilling to content himself with a more modest situation."

Wisdom and foresight—the essential Washington: but hitherto Europeans had not talked in the style of the *blondinet* who, however awkward at the French Court, was at no loss for the right kind of words here.

La Fayette's luck was in, for, officially, Versailles was supposed to ask Franklin to intervene with the Congress in the sense of countermanding his first despatch in Gilbert's favour. But actually nobody was in a hurry—neither Vergennes in approaching Franklin, nor Franklin in writing to the Congress, and this want of zeal was a hint Congressmen did not fail to take: they realized that La Fayette was not to be put on the same footing as the undesirables who had preceded him. Time, meanwhile, was passing and the *marquis's* position at headquarters was becoming stronger every day.

After having appeared to threaten the Delaware, the English fleet made sail for Chesapeake Bay, in the south. As the fleet had thus vanished for the time being, the soldiers were cheered and their morale improved. When news of the fleet was again received the army crossed Philadelphia in order to be nearer the point of disembarkation. Washington neglected nothing which could raise the spirits of his men and of the civil population. There was a spectacular march-past: "With their heads decorated with green foliage, and marching to the sound of fife and drum under the eyes of the citizens, the soldiers, despite their ragged condition, presented an agreeable (*sic*) spectacle. The General glittered at their head. M. de La Fayette was at his side." M. de La Fayette who, in his *Mémoires de ma main*, writes of himself in the third person, like Caesar in his *Commentaries*, inhaled this new incense, preface to a serious battle, with intoxication.

Far from committing the error of shutting himself up in Philadelphia, the course advocated by general opinion but which would have entailed the risk of losing his army and his capital, Washington awaited the English attack twenty-five miles beyond the town, at Newport.

"A mediocre position," Gilbert wrote. "Some earthworks were raised. We waited two days for the enemy, and, at the moment that he was marching against our right, a council of war shifted our army to the Brandywine so that the stream should cover its front."

Batteries covered Chad's Ford, at the centre. The Sullivan division having joined the main force, the Americans numbered thirteen thousand.

The English were good at manœuvring. La Fayette recorded: "We received intelligence concerning Cornwallis's movements, but confused and contradictory." The enemy's march towards the fords at Birmingham, three miles away on the Americans' right, was discovered too late. The centre, where La Fayette was posted, came under heavy gunfire and was overrun. Superior when it came to ambushes among the woods and ravines, the insurgents were out of their depth when faced by a mass action and a classical battle. Engaged in trying to rally his disorganized troops, La Fayette received a ball in the leg. His aide-de-camp, M. de Ginat, helped to hold him on his horse. He tried to rejoin Washington, who was arriving with fresh troops. But he was forced to stop again to bandage his wound, which was bleeding copiously, and was very nearly made prisoner on the only road by which the army could retreat, which was jammed with fugitives, wagons and artillery. Twelve miles further, at Chester, there was a bridge: there La Fayette again attempted, before getting his wound dressed, to get some order into the retreat.

From Chester a boat took him to Philadelphia. The following day he wrote to his wife. "The English have gratified me with a gun-shot in the leg. The ball touched neither sinew nor bone and I shall get over it at the cost of a few days on my back. I hope, my dear, that you will not be anxious. Indeed you can be less so, since I am *hors de combat* for some time. This business will, I fear, have very grave consequences for America. We shall have to try to repair the damage, if we can—you should have received numerous letters from me, unless the English have a grudge against my correspondence as well as my legs. I have, as yet, had only one from you and I am yearning for news. Adieu, I am forbidden to write any more. I have had no sleep for several

days. Last night was taken up with our retreat, and my journey here where I am being very well looked after."

Philadelphia was lost. Part of the population took to the mountains, while the wounded man was taken to Bristol, again by water. The final stage was Bethlehem, among the Moravians, where, Gilbert wrote, "the gentle religion of this people of brothers, having goods, education and interests in common like one large, innocent family, contrasted with the scenes of carnage and the convulsions of civil war."

Civil war; that, indeed, was what it came to. The English had partisans called *Tories*; the insurgents were *Whigs*, these labels being at once political and social, and Gilbert noted:

Provinces, towns and families are divided by the rage of party: it is not unknown for brothers, officers in the rival armies, meeting under the paternal roof, to snatch up their arms to fight each other.

The English reprisals: they employ German mercenaries, "who know nothing but how to kill, pillage and burn houses". Treason of certain American regiments who, "trampling their brothers underfoot, enslave their devastated fatherland".

We have to take into account the circumstances in which Gilbert wrote his memoirs, maybe a little dramatized by what he later experienced in France: unchanging harvest of war and enemy occupation. Since he was fighting on the side of the American Whigs, he could not but consider the Tories as implacable adversaries and enemies of the common weal. He wrote of himself, in relation to the Americans, "never was adoption more complete". In fact he took part in councils-of-war of the republican leaders, "reassuring the Whigs, intimidating the Tories, maintaining an ideal (i.e. unbacked) currency, in misfortune only the more determined, guiding the revolution over so many obstacles". Let us not forget that we are dealing here not with people wishing to change the government of their country, but to emancipate themselves from an overlordship which had become alien. Right was assuredly on their side.

As the wounded man had nothing better to do for the time being, he turned his pen into a weapon, scandalizing the good Moravian brothers, who were nursing him devotedly, with his

"warlike madness". He sent to his cousin M. de Bouillé, governor of the Windward Isles, a project for an attack, under American colours, against the British Antilles. Bouillé liked the idea and forwarded it to the Court, where it was pigeon-holed. Versailles did not want to rush matters. Better still, and despite his breach with the authorities, he wrote to Maurepas to propose a still more considerable enterprise, again under the American flag, against the English factories in the Indies. Maurepas did not follow it up, but thereafter used a tone of benevolence in his dealings with Gilbert. He realized that this young man was capable of an activity which might, at the right moment, be useful.

Meanwhile Mme de La Fayette was mobilized by her husband as an ally of the Union. First he reassured her concerning the state of his leg, in terms which would not have disgraced the *marquise de Sévigné*:¹

The surgeons are astonished at the promptitude of the cure: they fall into ecstasies each time they dress the wound, claiming that it is the most beautiful thing in the world.

Since you are now the wife of an American officer, I must instruct you in your duties. People will say to you, "They have been beaten." You will answer, "True, but between two armies equal in number, and on a plain, veteran troops always have an advantage over raw ones: moreover, they had the pleasure of killing more, very many more of the enemy, than their own losses." (One recalls Louis XV, after Fontenoy, moderating the excessive excitement of his son at the sight of the English dead, by reminding him that "the blood of our enemies is still the blood of men" and that "true glory lies in sparing it".)

Gilbert's letter went on,

They will then tell you, "But Philadelphia has fallen, the capital of America, the high road of Liberty." To which you will politely rejoin: "Idiots! Philadelphia is a wretched town open on all sides, whose port was already blockaded, and which only the residence of the Congress had somehow made famous." So much for that famous town which, incidentally, we shall

¹ "Les Chirugiens sont étonnés de la promptitude avec laquelle elle guérit: ils tombent en extase toutes les fois qu'ils me pansent et prétendent que c'est la plus belle chose du monde."

certainly force the enemy to return to us sooner or later. And if they still importune you with questions, send them about their business in terms which the *vicomte* de Noailles will tell you, for I don't want to waste my letter to you in nothing but politics.

During La Fayette's enforced idleness the war continued. On October 4 Washington attacked the English, who were entrenched about Philadelphia: the business began well but finished badly. Heavy losses on both sides, relative to the numbers engaged, with little effect on the situation excepting further to weaken the Americans. Without waiting for his wound to heal, La Fayette reported to headquarters. Washington took him into his own house, but would not allow him to do anything until his cure should be complete. It was there that he heard the decisive news of the change in the fortunes of the war.

For Howe's victory at Philadelphia had laid the foundations of defeat for the English and vindicated the optimistic forecasts Gilbert had written to his wife. In his *History of the United States* André Maurois has written that Howe "committed the strategic error of a European, for whom the capital is the nation's heart". Washington was able to exploit this error by harassing Burgoyne who was moving south, from Canada, against Gates's little army. Very much the gentleman, the Englishman had forbidden his Indian auxiliaries to murder, scalp or pillage. This prohibition was not to the redskins' taste; they soon set it at defiance, and made off with the arms and equipment entrusted to them. Cut off from his colleague, St Leger, who had been held up on the way by a well-defended fort, more or less deprived of provisions in the primeval forests, it was Burgoyne's folly to persist in trying to obey orders which required him to get to Albany and there join Howe who, meanwhile, was sailing towards Chesapeake. Encircled, his retreat towards Canada closed by General Lincoln, and with Gates denying him access to New York, he was forced to shut himself up in Saratoga. The surrender of five thousand men caused a sensation which was to change the face of the world.¹

¹ The eminent historian Pierre de Lacretelle published an article entitled *Comment La Fayette partit pour la guerre de l'Indépendance*. (*Figaro littéraire*, October 18, 1952.) According to the sources, partly American and English, used by this author, certain details differ from the notes later written by

We should emphasize a point which is not without importance. Gates, no less gentlemanly than Burgoyne, gave permission for the defeated troops to return to England by way of Boston. But the Congress would not ratify this clause, in consequence of which the beaten and disarmed soldiers began wandering about the country. Maurois writes:

When, subsequently, peace had been signed and it was desired to repatriate it [the army], it was discovered that it had ceased to be. The soldiers had turned colonists.

the *marquis*. Failure of La Fayette's memory? More probably a wish to veil certain painful episodes in his reception by the Americans, prejudiced by the behaviour of the adventurers who had preceded him.

There is a very curious revelation concerning the part played by the *comte de Broglie*. It was known that he wished to command the expeditionary force. But there was more than that: a *mémoire* written to his order by Kalb asked for a marshal's baton for Gilbert's uncle and the command-in-chief of the whole Union army, that is to say Washington's post. Silas Deane did not consider it fitting to forward this *mémoire* to the Congress.

Was La Fayette a volunteer or an envoy? He may, indeed, have been an envoy. De Broglie may have wished to employ him in creating, in America, a climate favourable to his own ambition, whereas Vergennes would not have wished to support the young man openly so long as war between France and England was not declared.

Chapter 3



THE AMERICAN FREEMASON

WHILE Europe was ringing with the fame of the victors of Saratoga, their situation was, in fact, somewhat critical. Even from the strategical point of view the position was not entirely satisfactory, and there remained plenty of work to satisfy Gilbert's appetite for it now that, although he could not put a boot on his wounded leg, he was beginning to ride again.

With three hundred and fifty men he attacked a position held by four hundred Hessians, a skirmish managed with so much energy that Cornwallis thought he had the whole of Gates's corps in front of him. Instead of supporting his detachment, he fell back, while in the meantime the Americans returned unmolested to their base at Witmarsh, twelve miles from Philadelphia and well covered by the forest.

On December 1, the Congress voted a resolution the sense of which was that it would be very pleasing to them to see the *marquis* de La Fayette in command of a division. Washington, replacing General Stephen, entrusted him with the command of the Virginian militia. La Fayette had to equip them more or less at his own expense. After a few desultory contacts and advance-party skirmishes, the Americans crossed the Schuylkill and occupied Valley Forge, twenty-two miles from Philadelphia.

"There", as La Fayette said, "making skilful use of the trunks of small trees, a town all of wood was built in a few days, in which melancholy winter quarters the army settled down. . . ."

The economic future of the United States was no better assured than the military one. Their paper money, without gold or silver backing, was more or less worthless. The English had

counterfeited it and their partisans were discrediting it. What we now call "black market" and "trading with the enemy" began on a vast scale, for New York and Philadelphia, both well provisioned, offered an irresistible temptation to speculators. On the English side—golden guineas. On the American side—Washington's militia, without even boots, so that they might have been followed along the roads by the marks of blood left by their naked feet.

But there was still Washington. In his frozen redoubt at Valley Forge throughout the hard winter of 1777/8 he appeared even greater than on the occasion of his triumphal entry into Boston, twenty months earlier. His most dangerous enemies were not, in any case, the English, but the Tories, constantly conspiring and fomenting jealousies. The Commander-in-Chief's position was being undermined. Gates had supporters, and Lee, at that time a prisoner in English hands and believed to have gone over to them, had even more. The Congress was divided between Easterners and Southerners. And there was the same trouble between the representatives of each State.

Washington could not interfere. To inform the Congress of his army's weakness, their want of arms and victuals, would have been to announce the truth to the enemy with a fanfare of trumpets. Which was why, despite his energy, Washington's confidence in ultimate victory was not unlimited; and why La Fayette could write,

"The patient virtue of officers and soldiers"—those who endured to the end—"was a miracle repeated at every moment." It was Washington's personal prestige which accomplished the miracle. "For", as La Fayette wrote, "his person commanded respect and even love."

However, between the General and the young Frenchman there was something more than fatherly tenderness on one side and filial affection on the other, as described, somewhat superficially in our opinion, by their biographers. Yet this something more, an important if not essential component of La Fayette's career, was revealed by himself during a visit which he paid to the *Four of Wilmington* Lodge, in Delaware, in 1824. This was in the course of his last visit to the United States.

"At one time", he said (that is, until his affiliation to an American Lodge), "I could not rid my mind of the suspicion that the General harboured doubts concerning me; this suspicion was confirmed by the fact that I had never been given a command-in-chief. This thought was an obsession and it sometimes made me very unhappy. After I had become an American freemason General Washington seemed to have seen the light [*avoir reçu une illumination (sic)*]. From that moment I never had reason to doubt his entire confidence [in me]. And soon thereafter I was given a very important command-in-chief."

The *American Union* Lodge, which he joined during the winter at Valley Forge, was a national and probably military lodge; Washington officiated at the ceremony as Master Mason, "And thenceforth life was changed for the *marquis*, everything was joy, confidence and splendid commands."¹

The new initiate could henceforth, then, be an invaluable help to his hard-pressed chief in his bitter and obstinate struggle against adversity. Gilbert spent his energy without reckoning; in snow and storm he carried out the night rounds in person, and was without pity for the negligent. The harshness of conditions revealed something like a streak of mysticism in him. Determined to set an example to the troops, he made his own privations exceed theirs.

Washington's enemies were trying to win La Fayette over. He dismissed them contemptuously, at the risk of being involved in his chief's ruin, which, at certain moments, seemed imminent. With tact and exactitude he kept the General informed, and sometimes advised him. He was, as it were, a model Chief-of-Staff and, to borrow an image from Joseph de Maistre, a kind of "Minister for the department of courage".

Washington told Gilbert, "I did not seek this position. If the people are displeased with me I will withdraw. Until then, I shall resist all intrigues."

It was a type of ambition exactly in La Fayette's own line.

He himself, in a letter to his father-in-law (December 16),

¹ Bernard Fay, *La Franc-Maçonnerie et la révolution intellectuelle au XVIII^e siècle*, Cluny, 1935, p. 218; and P. A. Roth, *Masonry in the Formation of our Government*, 1927, pp. 33-4.

reveals the secret of his success, apart from his initiation into masonry: "I read, study, examine, listen and think; and withal try to create a master-idea for myself, in which there shall be the largest possible proportion of common sense. I shall not do much talking for fear of saying something silly; I shall act even more rarely, for fear of doing something silly; for I am not disposed to betray the confidence which has been placed in me."

It is almost too good to be true, at his age.

That phenomenon in Washington's history which is called the Conway Cabal strengthened his friendship for La Fayette.

Conway, an Irishman in French service who had joined the Americans, being very ambitious, was trying to make use of General Gates in opposition to Washington. He tried to win La Fayette for his party "by ideas of glory and brilliant prospects". But a letter, which fell into Washington's hands and which he gave to his friend to read, betrayed Conway. The notion that, even unwittingly, he might have done his "*père posthume*" a disservice was intolerable to La Fayette. He wrote to Washington on December 31, "I am bound to your destiny, I shall follow it and will serve you with my sword and with all my faculties. Forgive my importunity out of regard for the feeling which gives rise to it. Perhaps youth and friendship make me too ardent, but recent events have deeply grieved me. . . ."

Washington answered immediately, "I am well aware that you are quite incapable of entertaining plans whose success depends upon lies and that your spirit is too high to stoop to seek a reputation by ignoble means and by intrigue. . . . It is well known that neither ambition nor any ulterior motive have caused me to accept the position I fill. I have done my duty according to a uniform and inflexible rule of conduct in which I shall persevere invariably while the honour of command remains mine, without regard to what malice can do or calumny say. . . ."

Thenceforth, La Fayette was to fill the difficult office of information officer to his chief.

The year 1778 seemed like a deadlock to the Americans. They were in no condition to undertake any operation of consequence, while, on the other side, the English generals seemed to have

fallen asleep in their comfortable winter quarters in New York and Philadelphia. The letter which La Fayette wrote to the *duc d'Ayen* in December 1777 was not intended merely to produce a reconciliation between him and his "Cher Papa", but to press for France's entry into the war as an ally of the United States. No less than this was, indeed, required not only to beat the English, but to deal with the even more redoubtable internal danger of party quarrels and internecine intrigues. The several States were still divided from each other: Some of them were at odds with each other over their frontiers. The fact that the English were still on Union soil and must be driven out seemed to have been almost forgotten.

Was La Fayette aware of this state of affairs, many of whose contributory factors were unknown to him? He was perspicacious enough to become aware of it, even from his headquarters in Albany, where he was in command of the "Army of the North"—that is to say, a handful of men including, under his orders, Kalb and Conway. But his head was full of a plan which he thought would be decisive: an expedition against Canada. The idea had occurred to him in the autumn; he had submitted it to the Congress, which had taken it into consideration, and finally, on January 22, came to a favourable decision. A letter was sent through the Minister of War, to Washington, containing a commission as Commander-in-Chief of the expedition for La Fayette, and orders to go to Albany, there to receive his instructions from the Congress. In handing this to La Fayette Washington said, simply:

I am better pleased that it should be for you than for anyone else.

Without taking time to think, Gilbert declared to the Commissioners:

I shall never accept any command independent of the General: I prefer the title of his aide-de-camp to any other which might be given me.

He laid down his conditions to the President of the Congress: he must be considered no more than an officer detached by Washington for a mission. His reports and letters must, there-

fore, be addressed to the General and those sent to the War Office would only be duplicates. He insisted on making it clearly understood that neither intrigues nor the most flattering offers could divide him from his General.

On these terms he promised to set out for Canada at the head of three thousand men, "to see whether some damage could not be done to the English in those regions". To his wife he confided a certain uneasiness: "I am undertaking a terrible task, especially given my small means. As for those comprised by my own merits, they are negligible for such a situation, and it is not at twenty years of age that one is fitted to lead an army, to be burdened with the mass of detail which crushes a general, and to have a vast extent of country under one's direct orders. . . . The present month is not pleasant for travelling. Part of the way will be accomplished by sledge; and once there I shall have nothing but snow and ice underfoot."

Ice which, however, would begin to melt in March, at which time his three thousand men might be ready, sketchily armed and equipped. The project was madness.

Such, at all events, was to be the final opinion of the Congress. The expedition was limited to the building of a small fort to be garrisoned by the friendly Oneida tribe. "The love of the French race combined with a love of *louis d'or*", as Gilbert said, "induced these Indians to come with me."

The Indians, who had not seen anything of *Paleface* military strength, had resumed their attacks against the colonists. Hurons and Iroquois were on the warpath. Applying Lyautey's methods long in advance of Lyautey's day, the young General contrived to make sudden appearances everywhere, giving the impression that more troops were on the way. He constructed forward posts and block-houses. Occasionally he made a raid, to inspire a salutary terror. After which demonstrations he appeared in person, bringing words of peace to the Indians. Such appearances were not free from risk, despite his status as a French officer, for the English had been at work arousing the tribes.

Schuyler and Duane, in charge of dealing with the "savages" (Indian affairs, as we should say nowadays), summoned a meeting, a general reunion to take place at Johnson's Town on

the Mohawk river. Five hundred Indians, men, women and children, attended; the presence of the latter at least indicative of peaceful intentions. Full ceremonial dress, war-paint and feathers; bead necklaces, ear-rings and nose-rings. The pipe of peace was smoked. La Fayette, without apparent disgust and full of grave unction, received the long-stemmed pipe from the hands of the elders who had smoked it before him. Greetings, courtesies, speeches. La Fayette's has not been preserved. The text quoted by several of his biographers as dating from this mission was, in fact, a speech delivered five years later during his third visit to America. A few fortunate details enable us to fix the date at 1778. But in 1784 La Fayette did remind his audience of certain prophetic phrases he had uttered in the earlier speech, to demonstrate how exactly he had foreseen what was going to happen:

"The American cause is just, and it is your own. At least maintain your neutrality and the brave Americans will defend your liberty; your fathers will take them by the hand; the white birds (French ships) will come and they will cover the shores of the great island. Ononchio, like the sun [the King of France; the emblem of Louis XIV was useful], will disperse the clouds which surround you, like a fog coming down [upon you]. . . ."

It is very likely that it was at the Johnson's Town palaver that Gilbert received his Indian nickname, *Kayewla*, which signifies *redoubtable horseman*. There were times when these savages were not wanting in wit.

Great news arrived in Valley Forge on May 1, 1778: France had signed two treaties with the Union, one of friendship and commerce, the other of conditional military alliance; should England declare war on France,¹ the contracting States were to trade together and unite their councils and armed forces.

In the text of the note in which the French Government gave notice of their policy to the British Cabinet, La Fayette picked out a sentence which seemed to him significant. "The Ameri-

¹ England did not declare war, but it came to the same thing. On June 27 the French frigate *La Belle Poule*, commandant La Clocheterie, was attacked by the *Arethusa*. Her victorious defence constituted the first episode in the campaign.

cans having, by their declaration of (such-and-such a date) become independent. . . ." "There", he said smiling, "is a principle of national sovereignty which they will be reminded of one day." By "they" he meant the French. Was the *marquis* losing sight of the fact that France was, before America, his motherland? On the following day there was a review and a salute of guns in the camp. Gilbert turned out wearing the white scarf and inspected the troops. Although carried on at a distance of fifteen hundred leagues, his diplomacy was bearing fruit in Europe. It became known that, after having been received by Louis XVI, the three American plenipotentiaries, Franklin, Silas Deane and John Adams, called upon Mme de La Fayette, bearing witness to their gratitude for her husband's efforts on behalf of the new Republic.

At last La Fayette's hour had come: on May 18 Washington handed him orders which called upon him to move, in command of a detachment, between the Delaware and the Schuylkill, covering the camp and the countryside, to cut enemy communications with Philadelphia, to harass enemy parties, and above all to obtain information concerning their movements and intentions. It was an important mission for which he was to have a body of picked troops, but he was not to engage them unless he were assured of success. A month later, on June 16, he sent an account of this short campaign to his wife: "No precautions of mine could prevent the enemy's army from making a night march as a result of which I found myself, the next morning, with seven thousand men behind me and the rest in front of me. Their officers were obligingly engaged in deciding the means of sending to New York those of us whom they did not kill, but were, however, so kind as to let us slip quietly through their fingers without doing us any harm." The "kindness", of course, was forced. La Fayette had very cleverly ambushed several of the enemy's advance parties with a few men, causing the English generals to suspect much larger forces; meanwhile the main body of La Fayette's troops was crossing the ford at Matson, thereby escaping from the enemy encirclement.

His tactical genius became apparent. When the English evacuated Philadelphia and moved towards New York in two

columns, Washington sent Gilbert after them, with orders to come up with the left wing of their rearguard and do it as much damage as possible. On the following day, informed by his scouts of an enemy movement towards Monmouth, the *marquis* passed the information to his commanding officer, together with his own plans. He added to his despatch:

"I must repeat in writing, what I have already told you: that if you consider it necessary or useful for the good of the service and General Lee's honour to send him here with 2,000 men or more, I will obey him joyfully and serve under him, not only from duty but also in consideration of that officer's reputation."

His confidence was misplaced. General Lee's conduct turned the battle of Monmouth (June 28, 1778) into a near-defeat and the General was suspended for a year by order of a court-martial. La Fayette, with his two battalions hastily armed by Washington himself, halted the enemy's advance, but the English held New York.

On land, then, there was more or less a deadlock. At sea things looked more hopeful with the arrival of the French squadron commanded by Admiral d'Estaing. His mission was to blockade the English fleet and, co-operating with the Americans, to destroy Clinton's army. Gilbert received his orders from Washington on July 22; the Militia were to be commanded as to one half by La Fayette, the other half by Greene, and would be supported by European troops, for the Commander-in-Chief still had not absolute confidence in the volunteers. The operations would be directed by Major-General Sullivan.

The business began well. On August 8 a combined operation forced the English to abandon the north of Rhode Island and fall back behind their lines at Newport. But thereafter various circumstances checked the American advance while, the wind having veered, the French fleet was manœuvring into a favourable position. The English Admiral Howe cut his cables and made all sail to escape, pursued by the French fleet. "This spectacle", Gilbert wrote to the *duc d'Ayen*, "took place in the most perfect weather imaginable and in full view of the English and American armies. It was the proudest day of my life."

The following day the luck changed. A change of wind followed by a violent storm. The French squadron, with victory seemingly within its grasp, was dispersed, as, indeed, were the enemy ships. It became necessary to return to Rhode Island, then fall back to Boston. The operation had failed.

D'Estaing's retreat to Boston angered the Americans, despite the fact that the Admiral had made the need for it clear in a letter to General Sullivan, who, however, addressed the following order of the day to his troops: "The General hopes that this event will show America capable of providing, out of her own strength, that help which her allies are denying her."

Gilbert rushed round to Sullivan's headquarters. For once in a way he spoke uncompromisingly and obtained not a retraction, indeed, but at least a less offensive form of words. He then called on d'Estaing immediately the Admiral arrived in Boston. The Admiral proclaimed himself ready to make immediate use of his land forces, but quite unable to make any use of the ships which the tempest had left him. The following day, upon learning that Clinton had been reinforced, La Fayette had to set off again at once, covering eighty miles at a gallop in eight hours; he arrived just in time to disengage his troops without the loss of a single outpost, although they had become "mixed up with enemy parties". The operation once again earned him the congratulations of the Congress.

News of the battle of Ouessant, won by d'Orvilliers and La-Motte-Picquet over Admiral Keppel on July 17, came in time to soothe frayed nerves. It was a setback for the English, who were hoping for a reconciliation with the insurgents and who, accordingly, were trying to promote quarrels between French and Americans. Lord Carlisle, one of the Commissioners sent from London to that end, signed an open declaration to the Congress in which the French nation was taxed with "a perfidy too well known to have need of a new proof".

Gilbert immediately challenged the author of the declaration, but at the same time asked for Washington's approbation in this course. It was refused in a wise letter based on knowledge of men in general and the English in particular, a letter whose worth was fully recognized by its recipient twenty years later

when he was writing the relevant passage of his *Mémoires*. Meanwhile, Lord Carlisle refused the challenge.

The frank and open tone of La Fayette's letters has been taken by his biographers to be exactly representative of his feelings. It is possible that they have been mistaken. In point of fact he seems to have been engaged in two mutually contradictory projects: to get the United States to launch an expeditionary force against Canada, and to undertake a diplomatic journey to France himself. While his father-in-law, originally so opposed to his departure for the United States, was now urging him to prolong his stay in America, Gilbert was asking Washington to approve a leave of absence and, at the same time, instructing M. de La Colombe, his aide-de-camp, to explain his plan of campaign against Canada to a Commission of the Congress. This plan was accepted in principle, provided Washington should approve it. He, however, having in mind the shortages of men, supplies and money, wrote to La Fayette: "I do not consider the thing sufficiently probable to permit it to upset your plans. Many circumstances and events would be required to make this invasion practicable or reasonable." The circumstances to which Washington referred might be a French initiative; such was, in fact, the opinion of the Congress, which Gilbert was not informed of until December 22.

On January 2, 1779, *Correspondance Secrète* published part of a letter from La Fayette to a friend whose name is not given, dating no doubt from the last months of the previous year: "I am beginning to perceive that, seduced by a false enthusiasm for glory, I did a foolish thing in going over to the Americans. But I also feel that it would be a greater folly to return now. The wine has been drawn and must be drunk to the lees, but I can already taste those lees." Given the probable date, this letter seems incompatible with his request for leave. Was its purpose that of concealing his real intentions for as long as possible? Probably it was, for a trip to France now seemed to him more necessary than ever. The Rhode Island business, and the breach between the American army and Louis XVI's sailors which had been apparent there, certainly affected his decision, so that the reason he invoked—that is, his wish to fight the English under his own country's colours—appears no more than an honourable

pretext: it was, rather, as a diplomatist that he was really making the journey. As credentials he was to have the Sword of Honour which the U.S. Minister at Versailles was instructed to present to him; and a letter addressed by the Congress to "Our great, loyal and dear ally and friend Louis XVI, King of France and Navarre"—in which La Fayette was commended as "this noble young man whom we have found wise in council, brave in battle, patient in the midst of the fatigues of war".

We have already emphasized the importance of the War of Independence as a turning-point in the world's history, and we must not forget what these events meant to France: a check administered to England, revenge for French defeats in the Seven Years War, and the hope that France might one day reconquer her colonial empire. These things must surely have been in Louis XVI's mind. In any case the immediate advantage was certain. The danger for the future, although the King was not unaware of it, was doubtful and compensated for by the acquisition of an ally who, although still weak, would compel the English to keep a constant watch to the west. For England, the fame acquired by La Fayette must henceforth mean war on two fronts, the terror of strategists. The Americans, needless to say, realized this even more clearly than the French, which explains why they placed the fastest vessel of the fleet, a frigate christened *L'Alliance*, at the *marquis's* disposal.

Was the young man to be cut off on the eve of triumphing? About to set out for Boston, on horseback and in the rain, he was brought down by an "inflammatory" fever which delayed him at Fishkill, eight miles from headquarters, from the end of October until the beginning of January. There was a rumour of his death which, before it was proved false, caused grief to the army, which called him "the soldier's friend". Washington called every day to enquire after him, and his physician Cochrane tended the invalid devotedly. A haemorrhage, "as frightening as it was salutary", a sort of natural "blood-letting", seems to have saved him. His convalescence, according to Gilbert himself, was hastened by drinking madeira. He was more or less well again when he set off, after taking "a painful and tender" farewell of Washington. Cochrane, who still had charge of him, accompanied him to his ship, including the last, unavoid-

able lap of the journey through the drawing-rooms of Boston, where, by his patient's account, the amiable doctor "danced and sang in the most charming style". The ship sailed on January 11. In addition to official papers, the *marquis* carried a letter from Washington to Franklin which was to confirm his position.

Chapter 4



INTERLUDE IN FRANCE · VICTORY IN AMERICA

THE voyage was swift but full of incidents. Off Newfoundland they ran into a storm, a mast carried away and the frigate sprang a leak, all during one winter's night. They survived it. Then, more trouble, and no less serious: *L'Alliance* had a number of English deserters and volunteer prisoners-of-war on board: a dangerous cargo. These gentry were aware that London was encouraging crews to mutiny, by promising them the value of every "rebel" ship brought into a port, as prize money.

Prisoners and deserters conspired to give a false alarm which, resulting in a clearing of decks and arming for action, would enable them to shoot down the officers and seize the ship. However, there was an American among them whose nationality passed unremarked because he had long lived in Ireland and sailed British waters. The conspirators let him into the plot for this very reason—they wanted him to take command of the ship. This faithful subject of the Union hastened to warn La Fayette and the captain, who went up on deck, armed with cutlasses and pistols. The conspirators were disarmed and thirty-three men clapped in irons. As for the rest, had all the men involved been arrested there would have been too few hands to work the ship, and the afterguard had to confine themselves to keeping a sharp eye on them. After a week of this situation, with the frigate in a state of siege and a third of her company in chains, they triumphantly made the port of Brest.

Followed a stroke of irony: it was Gilbert's turn to be shut up; eight days' arrest in the Hôtel de Noailles—a merely formal concession to the principles of family obedience and military discipline, both of which he had infringed. Thereafter he was received by Louis XVI. "When setting me at liberty," Gilbert

wrote, "they advised me to avoid places where the public might 'consecrate' my disobedience." Which meant exactly what? Could the prudent Maurepas have been afraid that M. de La Fayette might cause himself to be proclaimed president of a French republic, by plebiscite? Probably not: yet there was a party at Versailles which must not be provoked—that of the Austrian Alliance. But fashion and public were too strong for the aged minister. And not only the public: at the request of Marie-Antoinette, the American General became colonel of the *Royal-Dragons* regiment—it cost him eighty thousand *livres*.

At the theatre—ovation. Extra lines were slipped into the play, a piece by Rochon de Chabannes, to do him honour:

*Voyez ce courtisan à peu près de votre âge
Il renonce aux douceurs d'un récent mariage,
Aux charmes de la Cour, aux plaisirs de Paris!
La gloire seule échauffe, embrase ses esprits.
Il vole la chercher sur un autre hémisphère
Et, croyant son pays menacé par la guerre,
C'est le patriotisme et le plus pur honneur
Qui rend à son prince un brave serviteur.¹*

Mme Campan notes in her *Mémoires* that Marie-Antoinette granted him several audiences and copied out with her own hand "some lines of Gaston de Bayard in which M. de La Fayette's friends discovered an exact limning of his character:

*—Eh? Que fait sa jeunesse
Lorsque de l'âge mur je lui vois la sagesse?
Profond dans ses desseins qu'il trace avec froideur,
C'est pour les accomplir qu'il garde son ardeur.
Il sait défendre un camp et forcer des murailles,
Comme un jeune soldat il aime les batailles;
Comme un vieux général il sait les éviter.
Je me plais à le suivre et même à l'imiter.
J'admire sa prudence et j'aime son courage;
Avec ces deux vertus un guerrier n'a point d'âge.*

These lines had been applauded and encored at the Théâtre-Français, everyone being very excited."²

¹ Quoted by the comte de Chambrun, *Vergennes*, p. 364.

² Mme Campan, *Mémoires*, Vol. 1, pp. 170-71, Cité des Livres, 1928. "What does his youth matter, since his wisdom is that of maturity? Cool in working

He was, indeed, turning all the ladies' heads. Was the *comtesse* d'Hunolstein less cruel? Mystery. His grand passion may have been Mme de Simiane, sister of the three Damas; she would seem to have been not unwilling to go beyond the limits of a mere *amitié amoureuse*, but the question is one concerning which historians do not agree. At all events he cannot have had much time to devote to his own household, to that peace and quiet which he liked to write about in his letters to his "dear Adrienne" but which, at the bottom of his heart, he cannot have wanted very badly, unless at some remotely future date; for he was too conscious of the part he had to play.

He published the letters he had received from Franklin and Laurens—which were his credentials. He was ambassador of the U.S. in France and of France in the U.S.—an, as it were, two-edged ambassador. He had to struggle not against public opinion, which was entirely favourable to him, but against the English and their agents who, unable to deny the American successes, were interpreting the General's return to suit their own case. "Louis XVI", they were saying, "is abandoning the colonies, for he has recalled the deserter."

Did the government in fact regret having become involved with the Union? Necker was pleading want of money in the treasury. There would be no expedition against Canada.

Maurepas conceived that a decision might be more swiftly obtained by acting nearer home—against England herself. No sooner had he heard this notion than La Fayette sketched out a plan, the principal agent of which was to be Paul Jones. The famous privateer was to transport a landing force, under the American flag. The troops were to extract forced "contributions" from the districts they seized and occupied, an original way of compelling the British to supply the funds which the French treasury could not afford, to pay France's ally. But before taking their money from the English it would be necessary to spend some of France's own, to commission a fifty-gun ship,

out his deep-laid plans, he is ardent in carrying them out. He can defend a camp or force a fortification. As a young soldier he loves battles, yet can avoid them like an experienced general. It is my pleasure to follow and even copy him. I admire his prudence and love his courage—with those two virtues a warrior is ageless."

the *Bonhomme Richard*, so named in honour of Franklin's book; the project was abandoned, partly from economy, partly from timidity on the part of Versailles.

There was also the Swedish project, which Gilbert discussed with the *baron de Staël*, Necker's future son-in-law. Four ships were to be bought or hired from Sweden and were to sail under Swedish colours until they were actually in action. La Fayette would pay nearly all the costs, the French treasury being committed only to the amount by which the total expense might exceed his entire fortune: the General was ready to ruin himself to help the Union. Said Maurepas, "He will strip Versailles itself, to help the American cause: once he gets an idea into his head it's impossible to resist him." The *comte de Chambrun* called this attribute "Auvergnat stubbornness".

Meanwhile, possibly to distract him from his "American" activities, much wanting in discretion, Gilbert was appointed to the General Staff of the army which was being formed against England, under marshal de Vaux. It was apparently at Saint Jean d'Angély where he was with his dragoons, and some regiments of infantry temporarily under his orders, that he heard of this project. But it was at Le Havre, facing the English coast, that he received, from the hands of Franklin's grandson (the child blessed by the dying Voltaire in the name of God and Liberty), the Sword of Honour presented to him by the Congress. A valuable and much ornamented weapon: it bore the names of Monmouth, Rhode Island, Barren Hill, Gloucester, all evoking victories; a figure representing America, freed from her chains, offering a branch of bay to a youthful warrior; the said warrior striking the British lion; elsewhere, a crescent moon—*Crescam ut prosim*; and, on the other face, La Fayette's motto: *Cur non?*

Followed two months of waning hopes. While asking for his opinion and views, Vergennes was careful not to reveal his own real idea—that England should be humoured at home, attacked abroad: troops were to be sent—it was, in any case, the *marquis's* own suggestion in the first place—to America. The plan of invading England was, finally, dropped: whereupon, they say, Gilbert wept.

Remained the project of direct aid to the United States. But

La Fayette, only twenty-two years of age and an object of jealousy at Court and in the army, was not to be given command of the expeditionary force. That office went to the *comte* de Rochambeau, veteran of the Seven Years War, who had been chosen by marshal de Vaux to command his vanguard. The *marquis* would go ahead and announce his coming. He embarked in the frigate *Hermione* on March 11, 1780, at the island of Aix, carrying secret orders from Vergennes. As on the first occasion, he arrived, like Hope, when the Union's prospects were dark. On September 1, d'Estaing had failed to take Savannah from the English; Georgia and the two Carolinas were held by Cornwallis, and Whig morale was at a low ebb.

La Fayette's orders instructed him to make all haste to rejoin the Commander-in-Chief. He was to inform him that the King, "wishing to give the United States new evidence of his affection and his interest in their safety, had decided to send the General, in the spring, six line-of-battle ships and six thousand men of the regular infantry". The *marquis* was also "to come to an agreement with Washington concerning arrangements for the reception of the corps of French troops, safe measures for their disembarkation, and *the extent to which the Congress was to be taken into the secret of our plans*". At Philadelphia the *marquis* was first of all to see M. de La Luzerne, the French ambassador, and put him *au courant*. "His Majesty, who honoured his ambassador with his esteem, desired that minister to take a full part in all the arrangements it would be necessary to make with the United States; the *chevalier* de La Luzerne would be advised in writing of all the King's arrangements, but he was recommended to make no use of this information until he had discussed the position with M. le *marquis* de La Fayette."

Immediately upon his arrival in Boston, Gilbert sent off an urgent note to Washington, following it up very closely in person. As soon as they had met he gave his friend an account of the negotiations and of the part which Louis XVI, with his flair for foreign affairs, had taken in the decision, supporting his ministers and, when necessary, giving them a lead. Washington regarded Gilbert's news as vitally important for his country. He was able to realize how carefully American susceptibilities had been considered in Vergennes's orders: "The corps com-

manded by Rochambeau will be completely under the orders of General Washington: the French are to be regarded as auxiliary troops and American officers will be regarded as senior to French officers of equal rank and seniority."

The expeditionary force was seventy days at sea, reaching Rhode Island on July 17, where La Fayette and General Heath were waiting with a reinforcement of three thousand Americans. Confronted by the preparations for defence which had been put in hand, and learning that Washington was marching on New York, Clinton gave up the idea of attacking. This was fortunate, for the picture of the general situation which La Fayette sketched for Vergennes, was somewhat sombre: "Officers and men have not got a shilling. The officers have only their rations to eat and have no clothes and, unlike the other ranks, no hope of receiving any from France."

There was serious disagreement between the allies concerning future operations. Whereas Washington, backed by La Fayette, wanted to attack New York without delay, doubtless to divert attention from the precarious situation of his army, and was prepared if necessary to abandon Rhode Island, Rochambeau, pleading his orders, regarded Rhode Island as his base; to march on New York would take him too far away from it. And the English still had command of the sea. In order to wrest that from them they would have to wait for the second half of the fleet, or for Guichen's squadron which was in the Antilles. Rochambeau, wanting to talk personally with the American Commander-in-Chief, asked him to fix a meeting and, on August 12, informed Gilbert of this move: "We shall get more done in fifteen minutes' conversation than with any number of despatches. . . . As for what you tell me . . . that our Rhode Island position is of no use to us, I must point out to you that I have not heard tell that it has been troublesome to any former commander. I am afraid of the Savannahs and other such announcements of which I have seen so many in my time: '*Vis unita fortior.*' I await orders from my *Generalissimo*. *Je vous embrasse*, etc."

But La Fayette insisted. He had reported the discussions with Rochambeau to Washington and had been given full powers to

work out the plan of campaign in which he was to command a vanguard of picked troops, riflemen famous for accurate shooting. He could speak with the authority of a United States General. But his deliberate optimism was tending to make the dispute acrimonious. He wrote a letter of apology to Rochambeau which was completely insincere. (It was only to his wife that he confided his real feelings.) In it he promised obedience and declared his devotion. Rochambeau was not deceived, and while officially making peace with Gilbert, did not miss the chance to remind the younger man of the lessons to be learned from experience.

"It is always an excellent thing, my dear *marquis*, to believe that the French are invincible, but I am going to tell you a great secret, fruit of fifty years' experience: no troops are easier to beat than those who have lost confidence in their leaders; and they lose it at once when they have been endangered for some personal and particular ambition. If I have been so fortunate as to keep my men's confidence hitherto, I owe it to the most scrupulous examination of my conscience: as a result, of the fifteen thousand men more or less, of all ranks, who have been killed in battle under my orders, not one has ever lost his life for my personal advantage."

Severe, and not entirely fair; for although La Fayette might dream of glory, his first thoughts were for the success of the cause he was fighting for. He had erred chiefly by excess of optimism.

An inter-allied council-of-war was at last agreed upon for September 22 at Hartford, Connecticut. To attend it La Fayette and Washington left the army on the 18th. It was decided to send the American Colonel Laurens, son of the ex-President, to Paris, accompanied by Rochambeau's son, to press for the despatch of "prompt and powerful" aid. Washington, who did not know French, and Rochambeau, who could speak no English, were all the further from understanding each other in that Gilbert, forced to act as their interpreter, did not scruple, in translating their views, to allow his own to appear. A waste of time and breath.

Washington had informed General Arnold that on his return he would inspect the new dams at West Point, key position on

the Hudson river. Drama: Arnold had been negotiating the handing over of West Point to the English. He made his escape by the narrowest of margins, leaving his wife, who went mad, at his headquarters. The plot was revealed by the capture of the English major, André, who was conducting the negotiations, with all the papers about his person.

More trouble: insurrection of the troops from Pennsylvania. The Congress entrusted La Fayette with the delicate mission of calming them. He went to them accompanied by General Saint-Clair. He was received with deference and heard their all too well-founded complaints: no pay, no subsistence allowances. Conciliatory, he restored calm and order while Washington, elsewhere, was putting down a similar revolt of the New Jersey contingent, not without harshness.

Restored to Rochambeau's good graces at the apparent sacrifice of his own ideas, Gilbert was at odds with his brother officers of the Expeditionary Corps: they, with the exception of Lauzun, although he was Gilbert's senior, had agreed together never to serve under his orders. Greene, the officer commanding the army of the South, after the defeat of Gates, was calling for reinforcement. Washington proposed to send him La Fayette. Lauzun asked to be allowed to serve under him. Washington agreed, but Rochambeau refused and Lauzun found himself being blamed by his fellow officers, especially by the *marquis de Laval*, Colonel of the Bourbonnais regiment.

Meanwhile the friendship of his "posthumous father" dominated all these difficulties. Mathieu Dumas was struck by it during a mission to New Windsor on which he accompanied Lauzun: "Colonel Hamilton, Washington's aide-de-camp, told us of the manner in which the *marquis* had reacted to a despatch addressed to 'Mr. Washington'. 'This letter', La Fayette said, 'is addressed to a planter in the State of Virginia; I will have it delivered to him there after the end of the war; until then it will not be opened.' A second despatch was then addressed to *His Excellency, General Washington*."

On the following day the American leader's solicitude for his "adopted son" nearly had tragic consequences. Having, after an inspection of the forts, perceived that Gilbert, because of his old wound, was very tired, he said, "It would be better if we

returned by boat." The boat, battered by ice-floes, was in frequent danger of overturning, while darkness and thick snow increased the danger. The boatman was shaking with fear. Washington took the tiller and brought the boat safely to the bank.

The year 1781 began sadly. Arnold had become an English General and was ravaging Virginia. Admiral de Ternay died at Newport. The *chevalier* Destouches, who replaced him, entrusted a small squadron to M. de Tilly while Washington was trying to capture Arnold, alive or dead. La Fayette, with twelve hundred men, feinted an attack on Staten Island, then marched on Philadelphia, embarked on March 3 at Head-of-Elk in a flotilla and reached Annapolis. Thence, escaping the enemy frigates gathered in the bay, he reached Williamsburg with several of his officers, by boat. There he rallied a force of militia and attempted to surround Portsmouth, into which Arnold had retired. But the fight between the two naval squadrons on March 16 gave the English command of the bay. La Fayette profiting by a favourable wind, outdistanced them and ran into Head-of-Elk. There he found the plan of campaign sent to him by Washington and the General's order to march on Virginia, where the army of General Phillips had just appeared. The task was arduous. Gilbert had hardly two thousand men: "I am not even strong enough to get myself beaten," he wrote to the Commander-in-Chief on May 23. "Before so large a force, we are nothing."

Nothing indeed: his men were without shirts or shoes. From the Baltimore merchants he obtained a loan of two thousand guineas to buy cloth. Not content with giving a ball in his honour, the ladies of Baltimore and their daughters turned seamstress on behalf of his army, while the young men formed a squad of volunteer dragoons.

Desertions started. In order to check this, La Fayette issued an order of the day in which, instead of promising easy glory and profit, he forecast an arduous and dangerous operation; whoever wished to withdraw from it was free to do so immediately. And he discharged as unworthy to serve with him two soldiers guilty of a serious offence. The method was wholly

successful. Not a single withdrawal; and one N.C.O. who was sick caused himself to be carried on a stretcher rather than be left behind by his comrades.

Washington, meanwhile, caused letters to fall into English hands leading them to believe that New York was going to be attacked. As a result General Clinton was careful not to leave the city while La Fayette and Rochambeau were "waging war with their legs" all along the irregular banks of the Chesapeake. Gilbert covered Richmond, capital of Virginia, and forestalled Phillips, who had been sent by Clinton to take command in the South. But Phillips fell ill and died at Petersburg on May 13, without any help from the cannon-ball from La Fayette's batteries which smashed through the wall of his room without hitting him. (A curious circumstance: twenty-two years earlier this same Phillips had commanded the battery at Hastenbeck, from which had been fired the ball which killed Gilbert's father.)

Lord Cornwallis was clever at manœuvring: he wrote, "The boy cannot escape me." To move more swiftly he had abandoned all his baggage, including his own personal baggage. Since La Fayette had done the same, the manœuvring eventually became a race. No permanent quarters; at night the armies bivouacked.

Washington sent the *marquis* General Wayne's Pennsylvanians. Too weak, despite this reinforcement, to risk a pitched battle, his task was to harass the English without letting them catch him. He succeeded beyond what was required of him. Every conceivable movement which could be made in a war of movement he thought of and carried out. Not one imprudent move, not a check, not even a partial failure. Cornwallis knew that somewhere, in front of him, behind him, to the left or right, constantly changing, was a small force, a quarter the size of his own, of which he could have made a mere mouthful. Contrary to what was long believed, Cornwallis was not unaware of this. But he had been ordered by Clinton to fall back on Williamsburg by way of the River James, an order which he dared not disobey, which he knew would be fatal and the reason for which he had not been told. The fact was Clinton did not want Cornwallis to have all the glory: he must not be allowed to be too successful.

Gilbert, of course, could not guess that his best ally was the English Supreme Commander: he made his moves as if Cornwallis's hands were free and was astonished at his adversary's passiveness, and his haste to get into York Town. He had been the better player, but he attributed his success to luck and wrote to "his dear heart": "*It was not reasonable to entrust me with such a command* [the underlining was his own]; had I been unfortunate the public would have attributed it (my appointment) to blind favouritism."

Washington had been able to profit by Clinton's failure to move from New York. He sent Rochambeau towards Hartford while he remained, for a while, before Manhattan Island. Numerous reconnaissances gave the impression that he was about to attack—factitious activity with the object of killing time until the arrival of the French fleet should cut the English off, remove all chance of re-embarkation, and so make their disaster complete.

First of the naval force to appear was the *comte* de Barras, in the *Concorde*, to replace de Ternay in the naval command. He was accompanied by the *vicomte* de Rochambeau who, as we have said, was sent to France to obtain help and reinforcements. His results were disappointing: a little money, some uniforms, and nothing else. But this diplomatic reverse was made up for by the news that Admiral de Grasse, the victor of Tobago and Hood, was on the way. He was bringing three thousand men from the Antilles, excellent troops trained by Bouillé and commanded by the young *duc* de Saint-Simon. Followed the junction of this new contingent with La Fayette's, the occupation of all key points on both banks of the York river, and of the bay by twenty-eight warships. Cornwallis was surrounded.

Gilbert was strongly tempted. Saint-Simon and de Grasse were pressing him to attack without waiting for Washington and Rochambeau and before the English had completed their defences. But the achievement of such a personal triumph would entail the sacrifice of many lives. Was Rochambeau's lesson of the previous year having its effect? Or was it only the *marquis's* sense of military discipline and ordinary humanity? At all events not only did he reject the idea but put his case so well

that de Grasse, despite his hurry to return and protect the Antilles against a possible counter-attack by the English, yielded, albeit reluctantly to Gilbert's arguments.

Between September 6 and 28 the Franco-American army moved from Chester to York Town. The siege began in the first week of October. There were two redoubts to be taken—the one on the right by the Americans, the one on the left by the French. On the eve of the attack, the *baron* de Vioménil, Rochambeau's second-in-command, allowed La Fayette to see that he was in some doubt as to the reliability of the Union's militia in what looked like being a hard-fought action. To which the *marquis* replied: "We are, it is true, inexperienced soldiers; but in such cases our tactics are to discharge our guns and go straight in with the bayonet." The Americans did not even give the engineers time to clear a way over the barricades, and took the redoubt by assault in a few minutes and without firing a shot. During the fighting Miollis, La Fayette's friend, had part of his jaw shot away.

Despite a sortie in which the English managed to spike some of the allies' guns, Cornwallis's case was desperate. He was out of food and ammunition, and a quarter of his men were sick. He offered to surrender with the honours of war. The French were disposed to agree, when La Fayette intervened: "When Charlestown was surrendered," he said, "the English refused General Lincoln the honours of war." He insisted that the York Town vanquished must march out without music and with their colours furled. Cornwallis, to avoid marching out with his troops under these conditions, went sick. But on the following day he invited his victor to dine with him.

Saratoga; now York Town. This time Fate had made up her mind.

Chapter 5



DIPLOMACY AND A HARVEST OF LAURELS

THE *duc* de Deux-Ponts and Lauzun bore the articles of capitulation to Versailles. On October 20, La Fayette wrote to Maurepas, "The play is over; Act Five has just finished."

But Louis XVI's aged mentor died a few days after the messengers arrived and it was Vergennes who replied. "Your name is held in veneration. Although you were not in supreme command of this great operation, your prudent conduct and your preliminary movements laid the foundations of success. . . ." The letter crossed Gilbert in person, returning, before he was expected, with a Red Indian in his luggage. This was by reason of a resolution of the Congress, taken on November 23, at the instance of MM. Carroll, Madison and Cornell, which, in formal terms, conferred on the *marquis* a post at least equal to an ambassador's.

The news of his return reached the Hôtel de Ville during a feast in honour of the Dauphin's birthday. Mme de La Fayette was a guest: she returned to the Hôtel de Noailles not in her own carriage, but in that of the Queen, who insisted upon driving her home herself.

The youthful conqueror entered upon an apotheosis. He became *Maréchal de Camp* of the King's armies, appointed as soon as he arrived; he was cheered in public places, his prowess was celebrated in song—the verse was generally vile—on the stage, and he was embraced in the *salons*. The *duc* de Choiseul, somewhat irritated by the infatuation of a group of Gilbert's lady admirers, told them, "For my part, ladies, all I can see in M. de La Fayette is Gilles Caesar." The witticism delighted Mirabeau, who subsequently adopted it.

On June 24, 1782, Gilbert was affiliated to the *Mother Lodge of Saint John of Scotland and the Social Contract*—unani-

mously and with the rank of master, an extraordinary infraction of masonic custom which calls for a ballot, even in the case of princes.

And finally, in the course of a ball given in the Hall of Mirrors in honour of the *tsarevitch* Paul and his wife, *née* princess of Württemberg, Marie-Antoinette, apparently forgetting her former antipathy, made Gilbert her partner in the *contredanse*.

Presented to Louis XVI by the American minister, at the order of the Congress, he was able to write to his beloved general to tell him what feelings of esteem, admiration and confidence the King entertained for the First Citizen of the United States. From Gilbert, Washington also learned official French views: "It is generally thought here that the efforts made by America are inferior to what she could do. Nothing could contribute more towards obtaining more help (from France) than the positive assurance of your having a numerous, well-equipped and well-provisioned army on a war footing. The Congress should pay close attention to this point." The letter seems to reveal the influence of the prudent Vergennes, preparing for a possible prolongation of the war quite as much as for the immediate conclusion of peace.

For even after York Town the Tories had not given up all hope. Hence the idea of making sure of victory by a vast Franco-Spanish operation, on land and sea, which would be launched from Cadiz under the command of Admiral d'Estaing, with La Fayette as Chief-of-Staff.

La Fayette had, on November 22, 1782, sent Vergennes a cleverly argued plea with a view to obtaining funds. He did not forget that, although he was an American general, he was addressing a French minister: if the Union did not receive financial aid, part of the militia would have to be dismissed. Reassured, the English would strip their positions on the mainland and throw all their military weight against the Antilles. The argument was impeccable, but where was the money to come from? According to Gilbert it was already there: Rochambeau's army was to leave America sooner than had been anticipated: "Could we not give them at least the amount which the Finance Minister must certainly have set aside for the yearly maintenance of that army?"

He obtained six million *livres*.¹

While La Fayette was thus toying with the notion of a new campaign in Virginia (he had given the name to his new daughter, a seven-months child who was to become Madame de Lasteyrie), d'Estaing had gone to Madrid to concert measures with Carlos III for a common attack on New York and Canada with sixty-six ships and twenty-six thousand men. A beginning was to be made by taking Jamaica, of which d'Estaing proposed to nominate La Fayette as provisional commander: to this the King objected—"No, no, he'll make it a republic!" The revolutionary reputation of *Kayewla* was already well established.

These preparations were in vain. The fleet was ready to set sail when the news of peace arrived. Unknown to Vergennes ("un a parte cavalier", wrote the *marquis* de Chambrun), preliminaries of peace had been signed by the American Commissioners, with Great Britain, on November 28. When Gilbert begged for the honour of carrying the official declaration of this to the United States in person, Carmichael, the American *chargé d'affaires*, pointed out the importance of the negotiations with Spain and the influence which La Fayette could have on them in the Union's favour. The *marquis* therefore confined himself to writing to the Congress and to Washington by a French vessel symbolically named *Triomphe*. To the Congress he wrote of strengthening the federal union and being 'ware of European intrigues—"the hopes and wishes of a heart more American than words can express". To Washington he announced his intention of visiting him during the following summer, and meanwhile proposed that together they should purchase a property and free its slaves, employing them as paid agricultural hands. Simply as an experiment. "If it is a strange project, I prefer to be mad after that fashion, than to be thought wise for behaving in the opposite way." The estate—he was never to go and see it—was to be bought in Cayenne. He proposed to entrust his dearest Adrienne with its administration on the lines he would lay down. For her the principal motive would be a wish to convert the Blacks to the Roman Catholic religion. Washington, who must have smiled at his

¹ £300,000 gold.

young friend's enthusiasm, replied that he would be happy to join with Gilbert in so praiseworthy an undertaking, but that he would await the pleasure of seeing him before going into the details of the business.

At Madrid Gilbert obtained recognition of Carmichael as American *chargé d'affaires*. And it was also Gilbert who outlined a suitable arrangement and discussed it with the minister, Florida Blanca. Thereafter he pleaded his non-official standing as a mere private citizen, to avoid any undertaking on the part of France. To Robert Livingstone he wrote: "I believe I left Spain intending, wisely and sincerely, to cultivate American friendship."

In Paris again: the question of free ports for United States merchandise came up. The ministry had two in mind, Bayonne and Dunkerque. Gilbert demanded two more, Lorient and Marseilles. Always, as Maurepas would have said, ready to strip France, to clothe his beloved America. He won only Lorient.

A trip which he had wanted to make into Auvergne was undertaken at the end of March, having been delayed by the wedding of his youngest sister-in-law, Rosalie, to the *marquis* de Grammont. *Kayewa* whirled through the province like a gust of wind, only just giving his wife time to make a conquest of his aunt de Chavaniac while he himself was brooding over the question of the "Cincinnati". The origin of this society is sufficiently well known: American army officers envisaged it as a friendly order of well-doing and chivalry to perpetuate the memory of their comradeship and to assist the families of fallen comrades. They had offered the office of president to Washington. On December 16, La Fayette wrote to Vergennes to obtain permission for French holders of the order to wear it; no officer of the French royal armies was allowed to wear any foreign decoration excepting the Golden Fleece.

It was, apparently, at Chavaniac that he received the letter in which Washington informed his friend he was now a simple citizen on the banks of the Potomac, in the shade of his vine and his fig tree, free from the tumult of the camps and the excitement of public life. He had, he wrote, not merely withdrawn from public business but was restored to himself. Envy

nobody he was determined to be content with everybody and, in that state of mind, would drift gently down the river of life until he came to rest with his fathers. A beautiful letter, justly famous (Guizot describes it as a "monument"), and the style of which is equal to the matter.

In June La Fayette embarked in the packet *Courier de l'Europe* with the *chevalier* de Caraman and *capitaine de frégate* de Granchein. He arrived in New York on August 4. His luggage contained a mason's apron embroidered by Adrienne for Washington.¹

The master of Mount Vernon came to meet his friend at Richmond, on the field of the 1781 campaign, and conducted him to his hermitage. Faithful to our rule of setting down nothing without definite and precise sources, we should point out here that documents concerned with this, La Fayette's third visit to America, are as scarce as they are copious in connection with every other period of his life. There are, naturally, no letters to his "dear general" with whom he stayed for a fortnight and who then accompanied him on his tour, notably to Baltimore and Philadelphia. We know that he delivered a number of speeches only some of which were published by Saint-John-Crèveœur,² but which were only listed in the *Mémoires* published by his family. He received numerous delegations and made replies to their compliments. At Marbled Head women were the majority of the delegation, that town having lost half its male population in the war. "It was their wish", he was told, "to be here in the place of their husbands and their sons, many of whom were known to you."

At Albany, his one-time headquarters, he was invited to go to Fort Schuyler, accompanied by M. de Marbois, to be present at the conclusion of a Treaty between the Indians and the United States. He slept in a block-house where there was barely

¹ The President wore it nine years later when laying the foundation stone of the Capitol. The fact that the very pious *marquise* should have embroidered this insignia is proof of her confidence in the matter of the religious character of masonry at that date.

² *Lettres d'un cultivateur américain*, Paris, 1787. La Fayette's *Mémoires*, Vol. 11, pp. 104 *et seq.*

room for himself and his aide-de-camp. Others of his party, who had gone with him out of curiosity, slept in the open, under the stars. There was a numerous gathering of chiefs, both of the friendly tribes and those who fought for the English, the "Tory Indians" who were still under English influence: all were in full ceremonial rig. It was at this gathering that La Fayette delivered the speech which many of his biographers have attributed to the 1777/8 campaign (the effect of which is to render it incomprehensible, and the reply of the Red Indian Chief even more so) the speech and reply belong to 1784 and not to 1778, when the defeat of the English was still in the future.

In 1784, then, La Fayette recalled what he had said six years before, when he had announced the coming of "white birds" carrying the soldiers of *Ononthio-who-is-like-the-sun*, and when he warned them against those who bade them not to hearken to *Kayewla*. "Peace", he told them, "has been made and you know its conditions. What I predicted having come to pass, hear now *Kayewla's* new advice, and may my voice ring out among all peoples like the voice of the salutary wind which, in summer, is the forerunner of rain. What, my children, have you ever gained by espousing the quarrels of the palefaces?¹ Be wiser than the white men, and since the Great Council of the United States is ready to treat with you, take advantage of its good will."

La Fayette was so successful in imitating the florid Indian style, while slipping a few solid truths between the metaphors, that in answering him *Ocksicanehion*, the Mohawk chief, and *Grasshopper* (*La Sauterelle*), spokesman for the friendly tribes, found nothing better to say than a repetition of his own words; they added an assurance that his words had been well understood and that his advice would be followed.

La Fayette's final speech in the United States, made when he was received by a Congressional Committee, was a great deal less colourful than his Indian oratory. Official eloquence—though, as to sentiment, sincere enough on both sides. The peroration alone need appear here: "May this immense temple of liberty which we have just built be forever a lesson to the oppressors, an example to the oppressed, an asylum for the rights of the human species, and may it rejoice the *manes* of its

¹ "gens du point du jour."

founders in future centuries." It was in such terms that the *marquis* proposed to transform the emancipation of the English colonies in America into a world-wide political programme.

After a five months absence, after covering six hundred leagues of road—or rather of tracks and trails—and uttering words to a number which no statistician has ever counted, he embarked at New York on December 21. Washington, who had returned to being a private planter while waiting to be elected President of the new republic, had accompanied his friend for part of his way. When at last the moment of final parting had come and the great leader had set off for his own home, he wrote to Gilbert. The letter was a thoughtful one: Washington wonders whether he and his young friend have seen each other for the last time; he hopes not, yet fears it may well be so. He reflected that he was fifty-two years old and came of a short-lived family. Such thoughts darkened the horizon for him, spreading a cloud over the future and troubling his hopes of seeing La Fayette again.

"But I do not wish to complain. I have had my day!"

Chapter 6



THE DISCOVERY OF EUROPE

"I SHALL be back soon," Gilbert had written to Washington. Young himself, he was forgetting his beloved General's age. When he did come back—forty years later, he was to find only a memory with a halo of glory everlasting.

His own glory was at its zenith. His victory and the friendship of the great man with whose name his own would henceforth always be coupled had made him, as it were, the idol of "public opinion". He was convinced that France had only to turn herself into another America to achieve perfect happiness. The idea was not peculiar to him, but was increasingly widespread in the newspaper and book press of the period. In 1784 the *Jeux floraux* of Toulouse awarded the crown for a speech on the importance of the American revolution.

It is probable that his initiation into masonry may have misled La Fayette as to the exact nature of that revolution. The words and formulas were the same on both sides of the Atlantic and gave an impression of universality. The realities were very different. As Professor Barrett Wendell explained it in his *France of Today*,¹ "The word liberty, in the United States, meant liberation from a yoke which had become foreign. It was not an ideological quarrel but a question of arbitrary taxation which was the origin of Independence. In France liberty meant a new philosophical (not to speak of political and social) system based, in the last analysis, on a dogmatic negation of the old Christian adage that man's essence is evil. It was, therefore, a profound disturbance of traditional beliefs and of the ancient constitution of the kingdom."

What the author does not explain is the reason for La Fayette's

¹ Harvard University, 1909.

confusion and that of his companions; they seem to have been completely blind to this fundamental difference. The confusion may be attributable to Rousseau, since the society of North America seemed, to foreign contemporaries, to represent the ideal society described by the sage of Geneva. No classes, no privileges, religious tolerance, republican type of State. The young nobility transferred their Rousseau to the United States. They imagined that there they could see the *homo universalis* of the *Social Contract*. They failed to see that American society was not based on theory: it was the product of immigration into a new country with immense natural resources in which Negro slavery was resolving the labour problem for the time being. On the other hand, the France of 1780 had a thousand years of royal history behind her and a political system some of whose elements had, doubtless, aged, and gave an impression of injustice when looked at exclusively from the point of view of reason and logic.

An error, then, whose consequences for France and all Europe were to be immense. Those sovereigns who had given aid to the "insurgents" believed they were working for the world balance of power by reducing England's strength at sea; but they were undermining their authority in their own countries. In France, a country with an ancient civilization and a dense population divided into categories each of which had inherited different rights and different duties—a population, moreover, crowded into a territory surrounded by more or less hostile neighbours—it was an illusion to suppose that the preaching of a sort of evangel of liberty and equality would not unleash violence. The illusion was, however, general.

One Dr. Cooper, of Boston, had more foresight. To a group of French officers—Mathieu Dumas, Ségur, Berthier, and others present at the interview—he said, "Beware, young men, lest the triumph of liberty in this virgin land inflame your hopes too much. You will carry the seed of these generous sentiments, but if you try to germinate it in your native soil, after so many centuries of corruption you will have great obstacles to overcome. It has cost us much blood to win liberty; but you will spill torrents of it before you can establish it in your old Europe."

When La Fayette returned the drama was only at the pro-

logue. Optimism was general. Gilbert's Redskin, who performed a scalp dance between two minuets where society foregathered to be amused, appeared as the predecessor of Chateaubriand's *Incas*. The author of *Atala* was, incidentally, to fall victim to the same illusion concerning the goodness of "natural" man, but, with more foresight, did not draw the same political and social conclusions.

De facto, if not *de jure* ambassador of the United States in France, the *marquis* acquitted himself of his duties by numerous *démarches* and by letters to Washington, reports of the kind such as may usually be sent by a diplomat to his government. In France his activity was intense. In June, 1782, he founded a school of weaving at Chavaniac, for which he obtained from Calonne, Minister of Finance, a subsidy of six thousand *livres*. He intervened constantly in favour of the oppressed, or at least of those whom he deemed oppressed. First it was the Protestants: "It is not without its difficulties for myself," he wrote to Washington, on May 11, 1785, "because nobody will give me a word in writing, nor back me in any way at all. I take my chance. . . ." However, he did get an authority from the ministers Malesherbes and Castries to make a detailed investigation of Protestantism in the Cevennes. He collected documents and built up a dossier which, for the time being, he was unable to use; but he was counting on the future. In the course of the tour he paid a visit to pastor Rabaut, father of the future deputy Rabaut Saint-Étienne, who, after the meeting with the youthful apostle, delivered a kind of *nunc dimittis*. His son, a Protestant minister, was received at Mme de La Fayette's in Paris. The General took him to see Malesherbes, and Breteuil, Minister of the Interior, who instructed Rulhière to draw up a memorandum in favour of tolerance. In this connection, however, Washington preached prudence.

As soon as he returned from the south he went, in July, to Germany, making numerous halts: Deux-Ponts, residence of that friend of France the future Duke of Bavaria who had served in America with Rochambeau's corps (one of its regiments had a military masonic lodge, *The Three Friends*). At Rheinsberg, the country seat of Prince Henry of Prussia, Gilbert arrived in the

middle of dinner. Henry was, to use a term fashionable at the time, an "enlightened" prince, Francophil and, of course, a freemason. Etiquette was not tyrannical in his house. The *marquis* wrote, "They seem pleased with me, awkwardness included, and I am infinitely pleased with Prince Henry."

From Rheinsberg he went to Cassel, to see again "my friends the Hessians" he had beaten so soundly in America, "among them old Knip", otherwise General Knyphausen, his one-time adversary. Compliments were exchanged. At Brunswick he made the Duke's acquaintance—"formerly the famous hereditary duke who was supposed to combine, in the highest degree, military science and the confidence of the Prussian Army in which, although a ruling prince, he served as a general."

Then, Potsdam and Frederick: "I was not able to prevent myself from being struck by the costume and appearance of an old, dirty, decrepit corporal, covered with Spanish tobacco, his head lying over almost on one shoulder and his fingers almost dislocated by gout. But what surprised me much more was the fire, and sometimes the gentleness, of the finest eyes I have ever seen, which give his countenance an expression as charming as it can, at his will, be harsh and threatening when he is at the head of his army."

He saw Lucchesini, Frederick's favourite. "Do you suppose", he asked him, "that I went to America to make myself something of a military reputation [*which was what, more or less, he had written to his father-in-law in 1777*]? It was for liberty. When one loves liberty one is not at peace until after having established it in one's own country."

Was it in the King's presence that he made this declaration? At all events he must have said something of the sort to him, for he provoked that answer which every biographer has reported:

Frederick: I knew a young man who talked like you. Do you know what became of him?

La Fayette: No, Sire.

Frederick: Why, sir, he was hanged. . . .

They were together for a considerable time, in comparative intimacy, during army manœuvres in Silesia, with the Duke of York and "two or three others". Frederick amused himself by

putting La Fayette and Lord Cornwallis side by side at table and, to animate the conversation, asking a thousand questions about America, news of which country was given a tendentious twist by English agents. It was the same in Vienna, where the *marquis* was received by the Emperor, saw Generals Landon and Lascy, Prince Kaunitz and, naturally, his uncle the French ambassador.

He returned, by way of Prague and Dresden, to Potsdam, where, despite Frederick's serious illness, the troops were carrying out their programme of manoeuvres. Thence to Magdeburg, where the Duke of Brunswick was directing similar manoeuvres. Eulogium of the Prussian Army—its discipline and campaigning qualities; comparative study of the Austrian Army—far from the Prussian perfection of technique, much more numerous but much less expensive.

After visiting battlefields the *marquis* remarked with satisfaction on the good reception and flattering attentions he had received from kings, general staffs and persons of consequence. He communicated his feelings to his "dear general"—as an element of his propaganda in favour of the United States: "American citizens, by their behaviour in the revolution, won the world's respect; but I am distressed to perceive that they will lose part of it if they do not strengthen the Confederation, and do not give the Congress powers sufficient to regulate trade, pay the debt, at least the interest, establish a well-organized militia, in one word carry out the whole of the measures which have been recommended to them by you."

La Fayette's wishes were all, in due course, to be granted, even that touching the debts, which, after some delay, were paid. It is very curious that the contrary should have been so long affirmed, and that by people calling themselves well-informed, when the receipts are to be seen in the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and, in 1925, two articles by Professor Aulard in the *Revue de Paris* finally cleared up this whole question. It is the duty of the historian to insist, in passing, upon the truth in this matter.

In the course of their copious correspondence the question of the French hunting dogs which Washington had asked for came up. His friend procured them for him through *comte*

d'Olliamson. Thereafter three asses—a stallion and two mares, were called for, pheasants and red partridges: for the United States, a country of wild animals and birds of passage, was short of domestic animals and non-migratory birds.

Other subjects discussed in letters were: the *marquis* de Saint-Simon who, somewhat vain, would be very flattered to receive a letter in Washington's own hand; European "Cincinnati"; American trade with the Old World; England, where insults aimed at America seemed to be rather less violent, etc. Gilbert obtained favourable concessions for the inhabitants of Nantucket in the matter of their whale oil: the beneficiaries "municipally assembled, have decided that each one of them will give the milk of his cow during twenty-four hours, that the entire bulk of it be made into a cheese of five hundred pounds weight, which shall be sent to M. le Marquis de La Fayette as a token, but a poor one, yet very sincere, of the affection and gratitude of the inhabitants of Nantucket."

On May 10 Washington wrote to Gilbert that it was one of the inconveniences of democratic government that the people, who cannot always judge and are often at fault, are frequently obliged to learn by experience before being able to take the right decision. The following month, not wishing to be behind the inhabitants of Nantucket, he announced the despatch of "a barrel of hams (you know that the ladies of Virginia value themselves on the goodness of their hams)", but regretted having no peach brandy good enough to send.

Pitt, whom Gilbert received, made a most favourable impression on him: intelligence, modesty, nobility. A character as interesting as the part for which he was destined by his position. Now that he had beaten the English he took pleasure in meeting them. But, afraid of being taxed with Anglophilia, he wrote that his conversion was not complete; he could not forget that they were the enemies of French glory and prosperity. He concluded that, in the matter of patriotism, he had it in him "to *astonish* the public, as they say I have already done by my sensibility". Which did not prevent him writing to Washington on October 9, 1787, that had the affairs of Holland taken a serious turn he would doubtless have been placed at the head of all the republican forces of that country.

But it was France's affairs which were taking a serious turn. Gilbert was an habitué of Necker's *salon* and was there in touch with the whole liberal opposition whose members, heirs of the *encyclopédist* philosophers, were unwittingly working against the country's highest interests. For those foreign governments which were seeking to weaken France were engaged in forwarding revolution by means of the secret societies, the press and the clubs. At the famous masonic congress of Wilhelmsbad it was decided that two "protocols" would be held, one in German, directed by Brother *baron* von Gleichen, the other in French by Brother de Chefdebien—he whose correspondence was discovered by Jean Guiraud, who published an account of it in the *Revue Universelle*.

The sovereign council of the Scottish Rite had as its president "the sovereign of sovereigns, His Majesty Frederick II King of Prussia or his representative". And the Duke of Brunswick was Grand Master of the rigid observance, reformed Knight Templar Lodge of Germany.¹

Since the ranks of French freemasonry included many men who were devoted to the throne and to religion, Louis Blanc has revealed that sub-lodges were formed to plan revolution, while the majority of ordinary members believed themselves to belong merely to a commonplace philanthropic society.

To what extent was La Fayette aware of this state of affairs? It is difficult to say. A mason, but above all an *American* mason, the views held by his transatlantic brethren sufficed him. It was by virtue of those views that he was to emerge more and more clearly as a party leader. Albeit a party which, as yet, had no existence: it is necessary to emphasize that point in view of all that has been said and written concerning the strong wish for reforms which informed the whole French nation. La Fayette himself recognized—witness his own letters—that only the bourgeoisie and a small section of the nobility really had any desire for structural reforms. Economic improvements rather than a political revolution were what were widely desired.

Gilbert and his friend La Rochefoucauld were leaders of the

¹ Sources: *Monde Maçonnique*, Vol. XIV, p. 104 and Vol. III, p. 155. Pouget de Saint-André, "La Prusse et la Révolution française", *Revue hebdomadaire*, September 9, 1916. G. Bord, *Autour du Temple*, Vol. 11, p. 501.

reformist movement. They never lost an opportunity of preaching refusal of subsidies and convocation of an assembly. Their names appeared among those of all the provincial opposition groups. When Louis XVI came to drawing up the list of members of the Assembly of Notables and included La Fayette's name in it, it may well be said that the King made an important contribution to the collapse of his own throne. And when the State of Virginia, having ordered a bust of La Fayette for the State Capitol (*salle des délibérations*), made a gift of another to the Paris Hôtel de Ville, that gesture of courtesy was soon to become the symbol of a merciless struggle between Paris and Versailles, the France of tomorrow and the France of yesterday.

At about the time of the first Assembly of Notables (1787) La Fayette was arguing with a number of persons at the house of the *duc d'Harcourt*, the dauphin's tutor, on the subject of the history books which should be used in the prince's education. "I fancy," he said, "that he would do well to begin his history in 1787." A whimsicality which throws light upon the young man's state of mind at a time when he was about to play an important part in his country's business.

The Assembly was composed of one hundred and forty-four members of the three Orders, nominated by the King, with the presidents and procurators-general of the High Courts. La Fayette's name was at first struck from the list, then restored upon the intervention of Castries and Breteuil. La Fayette's policy was to bring moral pressure (since the Assembly was only consultative) to bear on the King in order to get him to accept a limitation of his absolute power. He broached the subject to a number of his colleagues and spoke of it to Loménie de Brienne, but the idea was rejected, notably by de Brienne. He therefore parted from that minister and enlivened the Assembly's debates by an active opposition. He belonged to the *comte d'Artois' bureau* (there were seven *bureaux*, each presided over by a prince of the blood), and in it he carried on a campaign against the *capitaineries*, that is the territories reserved for hunting in which the peasants were obliged to put up with the damage done to their crops by the game. He was, moreover, to speak on almost every question which came up before the Assembly.

Louis XVI had abolished the salt monopoly, that *gabelle* which appears too often in the annals and to which La Fontaine had frequently alluded in his *Fables*. Gilbert demanded the liberation of prisoners and convicts (*galériens*) condemned for infraction of the monopoly. Louis was to be depended on for justice and generosity and La Fayette believed his cause was won in advance (*Procès-verbal*, March 24, 1787).

Thereafter Gilbert, La Luzerne, brother of the ambassador and bishop of Langres, and Nicolai combined to denounce jobbery in connection with the management of State lands. The *comte d'Artois* reporting this to the King the following day, Louis immediately complained, "When a man permits himself to make such accusations, he signs them."

The question was raised again. Nicolai held his peace. Whereupon the *marquis*, supported by the bishop, declared, "I have said that we should attack the monster of jobbing instead of feeding it." He gave examples, dates, figures, and called for an investigation. "It is possible I may be wrong, but great disorder implies depravity . . . I repeat that the millions which are dissipated are raised by this tax, whereas a tax can only be justified by the State's real need, and that all these millions given up to cupidity are the fruit of the sweat and tears and perhaps the blood of the people, and that the sum of misery which has been caused¹ in getting together money so lightly thrown away must be a frightening spectacle for that justice, that goodness, which we know to be His Majesty's real feelings."

Astonishing and scandalous boldness! But he went even further, and in view of the (treasury) deficit did not hesitate to call for the convocation of a National Assembly. Followed the famous exchange:

The comte d'Artois: What, monsieur, you are asking for the convocation of the States General?

La Fayette: Yes, monseigneur, and even more than that.

The comte d'Artois: You wish me to write and bear to the King (a report of) M. de La Fayette proposing the (*faisant la*) convocation of the States General?

La Fayette: Yes, monseigneur.

A general silence, stupor and, on the whole and in the case

¹ "le calcul des malheureux qu'on a fait."

of a majority of the *bureau's* members, disapprobation. As for Gilbert's own account of the business, in a letter to Washington he wrote: "The King, his family, and the noble lords of his entourage cannot forgive me the liberty I have taken. But it is above all my popularity with the other classes which annoys them."

When Louis XVI compelled the Parlement to register edicts imposing new taxes and banished the *duc d'Orléans*, who was encouraging resistance to royal authority, La Fayette wrote to his friend: "The oriental despotism of the régime infuriates me." And when, finally, the King made up his mind to exile the rebellious Parlement to Troyes, public indifference in the face of this draconian measure exasperated the General: "The people in this country are so apathetic that I almost need bleeding to save me from the consequences of my own vexation." Again, on May 23, 1788: "To die for liberty is not the cry on this side of the Atlantic; as all classes are more or less interdependent, as the rich love their peace while the poor are enervated by poverty and ignorance, we have only one recourse, which is to inspire in the nation, by reasoning, *a kind of passive discontent or non-obedience*" (the terms are worth italicizing) "which may weary the government and defeat its plans."

Nevertheless his words concerning the States General had made more impression on public opinion than he supposed. By way of creating a diversion, or a counter-irritant, Loménie de Brienne convoked the provincial assemblies, in which there were no Estates, as Necker had done in Berry and Haute-Guyenne. The deputies were in part co-opted by election, in part nominated by the King. The *marquis* demanded—in vain, however—that they be all elected. He refused to act as president of the Auvergne assembly on the grounds that the president, being nominated by the King, would not, like an ordinary member, be independent. Elected by the nobility by 198 votes out of 393, he was heart and tongue with the Third Estate. He defended the indefeasible rights of his province and caused the principle of "abonnement pour l'impot,"¹ to be adopted, as well as getting the tax reduced.

The Breton nobility revolted—in writing—against the royal

¹ A system of fiscal forfeits.—*Trans.*

absolutism; he joined his name to their protest. The Queen expressed astonishment. "You are not a Breton," she said. His reply: "I am Breton after the same fashion that your Majesty belongs to the House of Austria." Under Louis XV the witticism would have put him in the Bastille. As it was, he was merely deprived of his military command; but he was for ever out of favour with Marie-Antoinette.

The "redoubtable cavalier" greeted the revolt of the Dauphiné Estates with enthusiasm, even though it was not parliamentary—the *noblesse de robe* being, in his view, an abuse, like the *noblesse* of the sword. He tried to "disennoble" the more liberal aristocrats by getting them to canvas their mandate from the Third Estate, which he managed to get doubled. The project was discussed at his friend Adrien Duport's, whose influence was active. It was opposed by Mirabeau—"The partisans of reform must fight their battle in the bosom of the nobility itself." Mirabeau's opinion was adopted. This was the first pass of the hard-fought duel between the two equally revolutionary but irreconcilable men.

Bergasse sent the *marquis* his book proposing the English Constitution for France. "No House of Lords!" La Fayette replied. "Wherever the hereditary principle is not necessary, it is noxious, and should be retained only for the royal magistracy."

And he also wrote: "My heart is pure, my mind free, my character disinterested, my conscience and the confidence of the public are my two supports: were I to lose the latter, yet the former would suffice." What a splendid précis of his whole career in four lines! And what unblushingly candid pride! (*La Candeur* was his first masonic lodge.) The writing was dated November 19, 1788, anniversary of the capture of Cornwallis. "That day ended a campaign which I recall with pleasure."

Pleasure: a singular word to choose in speaking of war. But he was looking forward to better things and wrote to Washington, "For my part I am sure of soon being either in an elected assembly of representatives of the French nation or—at Mount Vernon, with you."

Chapter 7



LA FAYETTE ACCLAIMED BY REVOLUTIONARY PARIS

ON the evening of his arrival at Versailles, at the beginning of May, to take his seat in the States General, Gilbert for the first time told his wife of Frederick of Prussia's witticism concerning the danger threatening the apostles of democratic ideas. He laughed at it a great deal. Adrienne was not amused.

He had tried to avoid becoming too firmly involved not only with his peers but with the Third Estate, which was anxious to recruit him: "At the risk of numerous quarrels it is my wish to convince, not to flatter." Independent of all party platforms, he had handed in his resignation as a returning officer in the elections and then withdrawn it. In the end he accepted the imperative mandate of his own Order, with the firm intention of not conforming to it.

In the course of the procession of May 4, through a town which was *en fête* despite the rain, all eyes were on Mirabeau, who, rejected by his peers, had been nominated by the Third Estate and was, accordingly, dressed all in black and wore no sword. La Fayette, only one of many in plumed hats and embroidered coats, was hardly noticed. Which was symbolic: not he but Mirabeau was to take the lead of the democratic movement—Mirabeau, the Hercules of Liberty, and Sieyès, theorist of the pamphlet *What is the Third Estate?*

When Louis XVI, confronted with the first difficulties, closed the *Salle* and forced the Third Estate to meet in the Fives Court, the *marquis* was among the first group of nobles (forty-seven) who joined "the Gentlemen of the Commons". The *duc d'Orléans*, who led them, had made advances to La Fayette, but unsuccessfully. They were both, to all appearances, in pursuit

of the same end, that which Mirabeau had proclaimed the previous evening after his famous reply to Dreux-Brézé—a Constitution. But Gilbert saw in the duke a potential usurper. On July 11 Gilbert, fearful of an “aristocratic plot”, supported the motion calling for the withdrawal of the troops stationed all round Versailles, a motion which was passed by nine hundred votes. On the same day he wrote to a member of his family or to a close friend, “I am convinced that M. le *duc* d’Orléans, or at least someone behind him, is trying to make trouble. Certain things have been said to me, certain advances made. Yesterday I was told that M. le *duc* d’Orléans and myself were proscribed; that there were sinister intentions against me as being the only one capable of commanding an army; that M. le *duc* d’Orléans and myself should combine together in all our initiatives; that he would be the captain of my bodyguard and I of his. I replied coldly that M. le *duc* d’Orléans is no more, in my eyes, than a private individual who happens to be richer than myself, whose lot was neither more nor less significant than that of any other member of the minority, that there is no need to form a party when one is at one with the whole nation. Meanwhile I am keeping an eye on M. le *duc* d’Orléans. And it may be that I shall be in a position requiring me to denounce M. le *comte* d’Artois for sedition,¹ on the aristocratic side, and M. le *duc* d’Orléans as factious [or “seditious”—*Trans.*] in more popular interests. All these mischievous factions will be set at nought by the force of circumstances as surely as will despotic opinions. . . . I think it is today that I shall put forward my project for the declaration of rights which will be referred back to the *bureaux*. No decision will be made and I believe we shall wait to debate the various plans until we have done some work on the Constitution.”

He did put forward his Declaration which, as some said in disdainful tones, was that of the “Virginian planters”, but to which he had added the epithet “European”, which was new (neither *French*, nor *Universal*, nor *human*). Critics who claim that his motion suffered a half-failure by being referred back to the *bureaux* forget the letter quoted above. He was doing no more than take up the position he proposed to occupy. Nevertheless

¹ Possibly only “faction”—“factieux aristocratique”.—*Trans.*

it was in the name of that same Libertarian catechism, the text of which was distributed all over Paris the same evening, that a certain symbolic and decisive act was to be accomplished: the storming of the Bastille.

A spark to fire the train, the crack of a whip—there is no want of picturesque phrases: but what he actually had in mind, in his Declaration, was an ideological revolution, for had he not written: "The principle of all sovereignty resides in the nation. Nobody, no individual can possess any authority which does not clearly emanate from it"? Whereas the fundamental law of the kingdom affirmed that all power comes from God.

He did not write, "God made all men free and equal", but "*Nature* made all men free and equal." In that respect he went much further than his American friends, who put Almighty God into all their basic propositions. For the first time, then, the lay and—at least in appearance—atheistic State raised its head in the kingdom of St Louis.

On July 10 a company of the *Régiment de Toul* (commanded by Choderlos de Laclos, Philippe's¹ evil genius), temporarily in barracks at the Invalides, came and fraternized with the *Gardes-françaises*. On the 11th the King dismissed Necker. On the 12th he rejected the Assembly's protests at the presence of troops in the Paris region. Upon receiving this news Camille Desmoulins, who for weeks had been urging the people to seize the *hôtels* and *châteaux* of the nobility, leaped on to a chair in the Palais-Royal gardens crying that "Necker's dismissal was the tocsin for a Saint Bartholomew of patriots" and that, at nightfall, all the Swiss and German battalions would pour out of the Champ-de-Mars to cut the people's throats. "We have but one recourse left to us, to take up arms!"

The white royal cockade was rejected. The orator proposed that they use green, the colour of hope. The crowd at once decked themselves with chestnut leaves, while the civic guard (*Garde bourgeoise*), just formed by the permanent committee of electors and placed under the command of M. de La Salle, adopted the green cockade.

Busts of Necker and the *duc* d'Orléans were fetched from

¹ The *duc* d'Orléans.—*Trans.*

Curtius' wax-works and carried in triumph. A detachment of the *Royal-Allemand* occupying the *place Vendôme* was stoned and driven away. Lambesc's dragoons held the *place Louis-XV*, and in the *Champ-de-Mars* there were five thousand men commanded by Bézenval. Lambesc tried to drive his assailants back; the charge of his horsemen was long misrepresented as an act of savage repression: in point of fact there was only one victim, an old man, and he was only wounded. Attacked suddenly by the *Gardes-françaises*, who made common cause with the rioters, the dragoons fell back on the *Champ-de-Mars*, thereby giving Paris up to insurrection.

On the morrow, the 13th, the same spirit presided over the organization of the Paris militia, brought into being the previous afternoon and before any reply concerning it had been received from Versailles; in any case the reply when it came was acquiescent, authorizing a strength of twelve thousand men. The authorities, however, were caught short: twenty-four hours were not enough. Which is why, according to Étienne Charavay, one of the most impartial historians of the period, the movement which on the following day stormed the Bastille might have been put down by the National Guard had its organization been more forward.

During those twenty-four hours the new cockade was green. But somebody suddenly realized that green was the colour of the *comte d'Artois*' livery. No more chestnut leaves! In their place red and blue, the colours of Paris, were adopted by the mob.

They were also Philippe's colours.

The first "14th of July" has been frequently described. Prolonged and patient research has revealed that the riot was much less spontaneous than used to be believed. Had it not been for paid agitators the old fortress, which was more or less empty, would neither have been taken nor, subsequently, demolished. Nobody involved in the business, La Fayette least of all, seems to have known what it was about. On that day he was lunching calmly at Monceau, at the *duc d'Orléans*'s with Bailly and Grace Dalrymple-Elliott¹ and the distant sound of cannon seems to have been his first warning of the trouble.

¹ André Castelot, *Philippe-Égalité*, p. 165.

On the 15th he still seems to have had little insight into the real nature of the movement, which the King referred to as a riot and the *duc* de La Rochefoucauld as a revolution. Meanwhile, at the Hôtel de Ville, they were expecting to be attacked by the royal troops, according to a letter written by officers who believed that they were to "march against the enemy" and were advising their friends to leave the capital. Moreau de Saint-Méry, president of the committee of electors, is said to have offered the command of the civic guard to Alexandre de Lameth in these words:

"You were in the American war. You *feel for Liberty*."

To which Lameth is supposed to have replied,

"If it's 'Americans' you want, choose the most prominent—La Fayette."

At all events the first commander, La Salle, had roused the anger of the mob—it is not known how—and was nearly killed. He was saved by a gesture: Saint-Méry pointed to the bust of La Fayette which was placed in the hall and set the crowd cheering. Behold the commander of the militia!

Since the 13th the Assembly had declared itself to be in permanent session. It had unanimously voted for a motion proposed by La Fayette and signed by Mounier, Sieyès, Chapelier, Grégoire and Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, demanding that ministers be responsible (to Parlement). The Archbishop of Vienne, exhausted by age and fatigue, was in the Chair. The *marquis*, returned in haste from Monceau, was nominated vice-chairman and was, in all but name, to take over the presidency from the Archbishop. Meanwhile, in Paris, the Bastille had fallen. To whom? A mixed crowd whose active elements were the *Gardes-françaises*, and those nameless men who, on days of crisis, rise like a scum from the lowest quarters of a vast city. There were also foreigners, Germans notably, and men of the Orléans party. Jordan de Launay, governor of the fortress, then Flesselles, provost of the merchants, were massacred and their heads set on pikes.

At the Hôtel de Ville nobody imagined that the "victory of the people of Paris" would be accepted by Versailles with good grace, and there were still fears of armed intervention against

the *Cité*. But news kept coming in. The King had recalled Necker: he had ordered the troops to withdraw. On the morning of the 15th he came into the Assembly in person, escorted by his brothers. A deputation of more than thirty members of the Assembly was on its way to Paris.

It arrived led by La Fayette, Lally-Tollendal, and Clermont-Tonnerre. The *marquis* explained how the Assembly, grieved to see that its request to the King, made on Monday the 13th, had not resulted in the withdrawal of the troops, was preparing to send a third deputation to the monarch to report its "alarm and grief", when the Grand Master of Ceremonies had come to announce that the King was preparing to come in person to the Assembly. La Fayette then announced that he was going to read the King's speech and depose a certified copy of it on the *bureau*, to be annexed to the *procès-verbal* of the electors' Assembly. The Hôtel de Ville thus learned that Louis XVI had given way all along the line. The *marquis* "congratulated the Assembly of electors and all the citizens of Paris on the liberty won by their courage, and the peace and happiness they would owe to the justice of a benevolent and now undeceived monarch!"

And it was only then, in the turmoil of cries of *Vive le roi!* *Vive la nation!* that he learned, from the acclamation of the crowd, that he was appointed commander of the Civic Guard formed the previous evening. Whereupon, drawing his sword:

"I swear," he cried, "to sacrifice my life in the preservation of that liberty with whose defence you have deigned to entrust me!"

There were cries of "Bailly, for provost of the merchants!" And again, "No, mayor of Paris!" "Yes, mayor of Paris!" roared the mob.

The uproar drowned Bailly's voice. Only those near him heard that astronomer stuttering, "I am not worthy of so great an honour, nor capable of bearing such a burden", while his head was bowed in sign of his acceptance.

In his speech at the Hôtel de Ville, La Fayette had said: "The National Assembly recognizes with pleasure that all France owes the Constitution which is going to ensure her happiness to the great efforts for public liberty just made by the Parisians." He was an optimist: popular acclamation—he

was not much concerned as to which mouths it issued from—was creating an illusion in his mind. He was convinced that the salvation of the country lay in his hands, which, if it was not true for the morrow, was perhaps true then and there. By reason of his popularity he did, in fact, wield a kind of oratorical dictatorship—Lamartine was, during 1848, in much the same case for several weeks—but the essential point was that he had just altered the political balance of the nation for a century. Henceforth Paris would be able to impose as many revolutions on the country as she liked. The King and the provinces were no more. Paris commanded, the rest obeyed.

It was in order to avoid this dictatorship of the capital that the royalists, at the time of the Fronde, carried off the child Louis XIV to Saint-Germain. It was for the same reason that Louis XIV, grown older, built Versailles. What, unwittingly, La Fayette was prophesying was the end of Versailles, which was to be consummated six weeks later by the King's return to Paris.

The fear which hung over the town changed sides. It was for the Court to tremble now. Since the nation's representatives were willing to accept and endorse the falling of the Bastille, that act, which an hour before they had still held to be a blameworthy, indeed a criminal outrage, was transformed into a defeat of despotism. The deputies "adopted" the insurrection, making its victory their own. One consequence of which was unexpected enough, and would be laughable had no blood been spilled (98 dead; 60 gravely wounded): the Paris militia found itself credited with merit for a movement in which it had not taken part and which it was formed to suppress!

The next day, July 16, the Hôtel de Ville deliberated on the organization of this new armed force. At the proposal of its chief it was laid down that "that military corps to which the safety and peace of the town are entrusted shall henceforth be called the National Guard of Paris", and that each district should immediately be invited to send to the Hôtel de Ville a delegate to establish the organization of this military and civic body.

It was none too soon: the riot which had stormed the Bastille

was master of the streets and the "brave *Gardes-françaises*" no better than malcontent soldiers who had deserted their duty to join the movement. On the same day (July 16) Bailly saved a woman who was about to be murdered on the most empty of pretexts. La Fayette interfered when the mob was about to hang one *abbé* Cordier, which it certainly would have done had not the General's son, accompanied by his tutor, appeared on the plinth of the Hôtel de Ville. The object of the visit? A lesson in *civisme*, no doubt, but one which, in view of the confusion, was not without danger:

"Gentlemen!" La Fayette shouted, "I have the honour to present my son!"

A clever diversion: the attention of the killers being briefly distracted, there was time to smuggle the *abbé* into the building. The General also saved the provisional commander of the Bastille, Soulès, who was on the point of suffering the fate of his predecessor Launay.

It was in La Fayette's name that at every crossroad in the town the municipality's order to demolish the conquered fortress was proclaimed to the sound of trumpets. At the same time the delegates of every military corps in the capital took an oath of loyalty to their Commanding General. Gilbert was gathering in the fruits of the insurrection in which he had taken no direct part, but which had now made of him a power superior to the King, if only by reason of the armed forces at his disposal, of which, for the time being, he was more sure than Louis XVI could possibly be of his army.

Chapter 8



"IT WILL GO ALL ROUND THE WORLD"

THE taking of the Bastille was, on the whole, no more than a half-victory for the people's party, Philippe's cowardice having caused his friends' plot to miscarry. On July 13, having in mind what was about to happen, the duke had offered his services to Louis XVI, who, unable to trust him, had refused them. On learning the success of the rising, instead of demanding the title of Lieutenant-General of the realm, as had been agreed with his accomplices, and suggesting to the King that he should act as mediator with the insurgents, he waited about the door of the Council chamber like a timid schoolboy. Thereafter he begged the King to let him go to England if matters got much worse. A pitiful conspirator. Moreover the King had been before him by handing his brother, the *comte de Provence*, a letter nominating *him* Lieutenant-General of the realm in the event of himself being unable to exercise his royal functions.

On July 17 Louis XVI, went, without guards, to Paris. Convinced that he was about to be slaughtered, he had spent the night putting his papers in order, had received Communion, and taken leave of his family while cheering them with words of hope.

He was surprised to be welcomed without disorderly scenes. In his *Histoire des premiers électeurs de Paris*, Charles Duveyrier, secretary of their Assembly and an eye-witness, described the event: La Fayette, on horseback and wearing a dress-coat (*frac uni*), as were the members of his staff, and without anything military about them but their swords and cockades, went to meet the King. He did not make a speech, but spoke a few reassuring words concerning the troops surrounding them. A necessary reassurance: there were two hundred thousand men

armed with guns, pikes, sabres and miscellaneous weapons; needless to say, in the front rank were the *Gardes-françaises* who had joined the rising and whose former officers La Fayette had replaced with their own sergeants, the only ones in uniform. For the rest, an enormous crowd, women, children, old men, every window filled with faces. The more agile had climbed on to the roofs. Yet complete calm reigned.

At the Hôtel de Ville—torrents of oratory: first Bailly's, as mayor of Paris; then the chairmen of the electors, Delavigne and Moreau de Saint-Méry, Ethis de Corny, procurator of the town, and Lally-Tollendal. A cockade of blue and red, the *Cité* colours, was handed to the King: he fixed it to his hat. If he noticed that the colours were likewise those of his cousin of Orléans he neither remarked on it nor showed repugnance. Was it then that La Fayette proposed adding the monarchy's white? It would seem that it was only a little later that the chief of the National Guard thought of correcting that "singular chance" which emphasized Philippe's victory. For he had had to remain outside, at the head of his troops, to maintain order. Duveyrier, our authority, says, "M. de La Fayette only went up to the Hôtel de Ville to take charge of the King at the moment of his leaving it, and ensure him a clear way." Having arrived without difficulty at his carriage, the King said to the chief of the militia: "Monsieur de La Fayette, I was looking for you to tell you that I confirm your nomination to the post of general commanding the Parisian Guard."

Louis, then, did not hear him utter those celebrated words: "I bring you a cockade which will go all round the world, and an institution at once civic and military which will surely triumph over Europe's ancient tactics and *which will face arbitrary governments with the alternatives of being beaten if they do not imitate it or overthrown if they dare to imitate it.*"

It was better, for the King's honour, that he did not have to appear to sanction a declaration which, formerly, would have landed the speaker in the Bastille.

A final symbol: at the General's suggestion the National Guard's swords were to bear on the hilt a Phrygian bonnet, emblem of the liberation.

The King's confirmation was not enough for Gilbert. He

submitted his appointment "to the deliberation of all the citizens of Paris". And the overturning of the ancient principles continued: the new Commanding General proclaimed, "The real deserters are those who have not rallied to the nation's flag." It was another of those apothegms whose repercussions might be unlimited. There was, indeed, the question of those soldiers and officers who had committed a serious breach of discipline by joining an insurrection in defiance of orders and despite the efforts of their seniors to prevent them.¹ From the King the General obtained for the guilty men sanction or pardon, at their own choice. Louis, indeed, wrote to him,² "I authorize you to retain all those [soldiers] who shall have gone to Paris before you received this letter . . . unless they prefer to return to their respective corps bearing a note from you which will ensure them against any unpleasantness [*désagrément*]."

Which was not all: they were given a medal—a little Bastille on a tricolour ribbon.

Not that all this went off without some difficulties. A deputation arrived to inform the General that Lieutenant-Colonel Maillardoz was taking it upon himself to grant the *Gardes-françaises* indefinite leave to return to their homes. La Fayette summoned these new style deserters to appear at Maillardoz' quarters. He found the courtyard crowded with soldiers. Inaugurating his particular method, instead of issuing orders he delivered an harangue concluding, "now, if you wish, you can go away" Success: not one took advantage of his permission.

Another incident: passing, on horseback, near the *Cordeliers* district and invited to enter a club, he found the room full of *Gardes-françaises*—always in the front rank when the operation was oratorical. He was cheered. Danton was in the chair. He informed the General that the district was demanding the re-establishment of the regiments in their former state, and that

¹ Clermont-Tonnerre, La Fayette's friend, endeavoured to justify the behaviour of these men by saying that they "*had not deserted their colours, since they had taken them with them*"!

² Letter recorded in the official minutes (*procès-verbaux*) and published by the press.

the command of them be given to—the *duc* d'Orléans! To which the orator added that none doubted receiving the assent of the Commanding General to so patriotic a project.

A bad business: but once again Gilbert managed it, as at Maillardoz' quarters, by guile. Writing, later, of himself, he said, "He contrived to disgust the citizens and even the *Gardes-françaises* with the project." Disgusted or not, the club did not pursue the matter.

Fertile as Ulysses in ruses, La Fayette was not wanting in courage. Louis XVI, Mirabeau and himself were, perhaps, the only three men of the Revolution who were not to know fear. He faced up to the anarchy which possessed Paris. Everywhere there were gatherings, domiciliary visits, summary executions. The General spent nearly all day on horseback, patrolling the town in person to maintain order, or rather to try to maintain it (a pun was to be made of his "*patroliotism*"). He saved the lives of a score of people, several times at the risk of his own; among them was Mme de Fontenay (*née* Cabarrus), the future Mme Tallien.

Until July 22 he managed more or less to maintain order. But on that day the ex-minister Foulon, who was loathed by the population of Paris, was brought to the Hôtel de Ville. He was supposed to have said that "the people would get more than they deserved if they were given hay to eat". And it was believed that he was to have been a member of the ministry formed to replace Necker's.

Moreau de Saint-Méry, in the chair, was struggling, hopelessly, for the man's life when shouting announced that La Fayette had arrived. He forced his way through the crowd, sat down beside the chairman and spoke: "You are trying to bring the man who stands before you to his death without trial; it is an injustice which would dishonour you, tarnish me, and tarnish all the efforts I have made in favour of liberty—were I so weak as to permit it . . . But I am very far from trying to save the man if he is guilty; I desire no more than that he be taken to prison, to be tried by whatever tribunal the nation shall appoint. [*This, in itself, was an enormous concession to the rioters.*] The stronger the presumption of his guilt, the more important it is that the forms be respected in his case, whether in order that his punishment

be the more striking, or in order that he may be questioned and the names of his accomplices obtained from his own mouth."

He was cheered; but there were ringleaders, more or less respectable-looking people, planted among the crowd. A voice shouted, "What need of a trial for a man who's been convicted these thirty years?"

The General would not give way. At least twice he spoke again and not without effect. But suddenly his voice was drowned in a tremendous clamour. A whole population unleashed—from the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine and the Palais-Royal—roared up to the Hôtel de Ville, broke about it, poured up the staircases, flung back officials, and surged up to the very chair. Yet Gilbert was on the point of dominating even this horde, applause had broken out, when Foulon made the fatal blunder of himself applauding. Immediately there were cries of "See—they've an understanding!" The accused's chair was overturned, fanatical hands were laid on him, tore him from the electors, who were trying to protect him; he was dragged out to the *place de Grève* and there slaughtered, his head cut off and stuck on the end of a pike with the mouth stuffed with hay.¹

On the same day Foulon's son-in-law, Bertier de Sauvigny, *intendant* of Paris and devoted to the Court, was arrested in Campiègne while trying to escape and brought to Paris. The General told off a group of volunteers, commanded by M. d'Hermigny, to escort him. Taken before Bailly at the Hôtel de Ville, the mayor, as La Fayette had done with Foulon, ordered that he be taken to prison "to be interrogated juridically to get from him the names of his accomplices". But while the volunteers were taking him to the *Conciergerie* he was killed by a pistol shot. One more head spitted on a pike, one more macabre procession. The two processions met; those carrying the piked heads brought them together and rubbed one against the other, and there were cries of "Kiss papa!" Bertier's heart was torn out, skewered on a sword, carried to the Hôtel de Ville and placed on the mayor's

¹ A few days previously Claude Huez, mayor of Troyes, had been dragged into the streets of the town, his mouth stuffed with hay and his eyes put out with a chisel, before being finished off in the presence of his family.

desk. Bailly was taken ill. Thence the heart was taken to a café in the Palais-Royal and the blood which yet ran from it collected in glasses. The drinkers sang:

*Ah! Il n'y a pas de fête,
Quand le coeur n'y est pas.*

A party isn't a party,
When the heart's not in it.

That was too much: La Fayette tendered his resignation as chief of the National Guard in a letter giving his reasons to Bailly and the sixty districts. The Assembly of electors crowded round him, urging him, begging him to remain. Refusal. "My retirement is required by the public interest. Yesterday's bloody and illegal executions, and the fact that I found it impossible to prevent them, have convinced me all too thoroughly that I am not universally trusted." Throughout the whole day—July 23—they worked on him without succeeding in changing his decision. To achieve that, "the benevolent violence done him by the electors and deputations from the districts led by the venerable *curé* of Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, and the most solemn undertakings for the maintenance of justice and public order" were required. The solemn undertaking was "signed by the electors and district delegates present, printed and posted up as the expression of the will and unanimous acclamation of all the citizens of the capital".¹

On the 25th the delegates—two per district—nominated to form the new Assembly of electors confirmed Bailly in his office as mayor of Paris and La Fayette in that of commanding officer of the Paris National Guard. Whereupon—oh, irony!—the General undertook never to forget the supremacy of the civil authorities over the armed forces.² And Bailly, growing sentimental, added that there was a third oath yet to be taken between La Fayette and himself, an oath of eternal affection. Embraces; cheers.

¹ *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 282.

² According to Bailly such is the significance of the ceremony whereby the guard at the Palais-Bourbon does the honours to the President of the Chamber of Deputies (*La Fayette ou le militant franc-maçon*, Vol. I, p. 75).

"The movement of July 14 ran on like an electric spark: in a few days all France was awakened. Paris, at this epoch, had to moderate the influence generally accorded to her, and to use it for the general welfare. La Fayette accepted no more authority than he could possibly refuse, but used his immense influence in the formation of the national guard of all France, and everywhere the armed force of Paris was taken as a model, and its chief's opinion accepted as law."¹

Let us make the best we can of the optimism informing these words, written by Gilbert (or at his inspiration) long after the event. It is a fact that he might have been *generalissimo* of all the National Guards in France. He did not wish to be other than commander of the Paris militia. He put away the temptation to become a military dictator in order to remain, at least in his own eyes, a faithful image of his American hero. So that, at many a critical moment, his good intentions were wanting in that strength of conviction which might have realized them.

Henceforth the struggle was to be merciless. Agitators were at work on a credulous and thoroughly jumpy people. The one-time veterinary surgeon of the *comte d'Artois*' stables, Jean-Paul Marat, made his appearance. Two months earlier he had been putting himself forward as democracy's adversary, attacking that movement by means of irony. Upon his reappearance, however, he was found to be on the other side. He made a violent attack, in his "raging"² newspaper, on the mayor of Paris and the commanding officer of the National Guard. Nameless hands were distributing six *livres* crown pieces. On several occasions La Fayette was shown a perfect imitation of his own signature to documents forbidding millers to grind corn for the population of Paris.

Came the "Grande Peur"—the "great fear", that universal panic, the secret of which has never been revealed, the Parisian share being the swiftly spreading rumour of the arrival of enemy horsemen at the city's gates. La Fayette claimed that this tale of "brigands" had "been exaggerated, for various reasons, instead of everyone quite simply realizing the electric [*he was fond of that analogue*] effect, in the French people, of a generous sentiment for which the signal had been openly given by the As-

¹ *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 268.

² "*furibond*."

sembly, the capital and their leaders". Which explains exactly nothing—unless that, at the head of an armed force of two hundred thousand men, not yet organized but devoted to his person, the General was in no state to experience that impression of being isolated and abandoned to which the country districts, deprived of reliable news and out of regular touch, fell a prey.

At all events the commander of the civic militia had constantly to be taking a hand, in person. As he himself wrote: "*Démarches* and speechifying filled the first days of the revolution. He had to prevent the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine from burning the pegs and other camping gear in the shops which, it was explained, might yet be of use to a new rally of the royal soldiery. The tailors met 'on the lawns of the Louvre'. Why? To delay the uniforms of the National Guard, 'the means to union and order'. Another time the trouble came from the navvies of Montmartre, to whom the town was giving work that they might eat. They were tougher: for them a 'paternal lecture' was not, as it was for the others, enough. Harsh words and threats of arrest were required to bring *them* to shout '*Vive La Fayette!*' "

Another day: the mob were hunting M. de La Salle, second-in-command of the militia, because he had signed a note for the delivery of *poudre de traite* (trade gunpowder)—that is, gunpowder destined for the negroes of the colonies; only, it had been misread as "*poudre de traître*." Hence a mad rush to the Hôtel de Ville to seize the "traitor". Happily La Salle was warned and made off while, a very long speech diverting the mob, an aide-de-camp fetched up the National Guard, which, pretending to carry out an exercise, slowly forced back the crowd which filled the *place* de Grève. To round off the scene, the General embraced La Salle in the middle of the *place*, thus conferring upon him his certificate of *civisme*.

The abandonment of (aristocratic) privileges, enthusiastically voted by the Assembly on the night of August 4, was an essential article of Gilbert's programme, and was planned in his own drawing-room in consultation with the United States ambassador, Jefferson; but it was Noailles, La Fayette's brother-in-law, who suggested it, impromptu, to the *duc* d'Aiguillon, thus taking a kind of revenge for Gilbert's fame, which he considered

a trifle excessive. The General, kept in Paris by his duties, could no longer take any direct part in the Parlement's work.

On August 25 he had to go to Versailles, at the head of a "superb" detachment of the National Guard, to offer Saint Louis Day wishes to the King. Anxiety and precautions. The only words La Fayette uttered on this occasion were to refuse, in accordance with his principles, command of the Versailles civic guard. Bailly officiated—by reason of the civil power's primacy. Some days later, at the beginning of September, the General—again on principle—refused the salary of 120,000 *livres* voted him by the Hôtel de Ville. "My fortune", he said, "was large. It has sufficed for two revolutions; should there be a third for the happiness of the people, the whole of it would belong to the people."

He urged Bailly to propose reform of criminal jurisprudence in the Assembly. Confronted by the objection that it would be imprudent to launch this serious measure in such troubled times, he made the proposal himself and on the same evening obtained a resolution calling for provisional reforms—accused persons to be provided with counsel, to have access to all papers in the case, and a public trial including personal appearance of witnesses.

In view of the solemn benediction of the National Guard's new colours, the General had to intervene in order to obtain the return of the old ones, "which", he wrote, "was no trifling matter especially by reason of the intrigues which were rife everywhere". The ceremony took place on September 24, Fauchet making a speech. At about the same time Gilbert received a visit from Montmorin, with whom he had been on friendly terms since his mission to Spain. A personal friend of the King, Montmorin was afraid of the "Orléanist faction" and was counting on La Fayette to overcome it. With that in mind, Montmorin offered him the post not merely of *connétable* but Lieutenant-General of the realm.

The General, having already received a hint from Philippe, knew what line to take. He replied that the *place*—he did not say dignity or honour, but *place*—would add nothing to his determination to defend the King "against the machinations of Monsieur d'Orléans". More definitely: "In the event of an

unexpected plot, the King had better come from Versailles to Paris, where the National Guard would do everything in its power to watch over his safety."

It will be recalled that just before July 14 La Fayette had tabled a project for a *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in the Assembly, which was referred back to a committee for study. The project came up for discussion on August 12. Its title, as we know, was *First European Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. The Declaration to which the Assembly gave preference over La Fayette's, although it was conceived in the same spirit and couched in almost identical terms, contained one vital difference. We noted, earlier, that the first word of the first article as written by Washington's friend was *Nature*. But the text for which the Assembly voted substituted, at the suggestion of Henri de Virieu, author of one of the articles which were adopted, "l'estampille de Dieu" (literally "God's mark" or "God's stamp").

Purely theoretical, the Declaration was worthless excepting to philosophers. Only such concrete measures as they understood, or thought they understood, were able to move the people. There was, for example, the case of the royal veto, a power left to the King whereby he could oppose the coming into force of a law passed by the Assembly. There were three possible solutions: absolute and final veto; a suspensory veto, holding up the operation of a bill for a given period; no veto at all, and hence a fully sovereign Assembly, the King being no more than president of a republic—which was what Sieyès wanted.

La Fayette wrote to Mounier, who was in favour of an absolute veto, that all the blood which would be spilled would be on his head. He addressed the same threat to the members of the ministry who were being attacked, every day, in tendentious reports. Gilbert tried for some time without success to reconcile the opposed parties. Finally Necker, although a partisan of the absolute veto, agreed to the suspensory veto in order to avoid interminable discussion and the tension engendered by it: the King was to be able to postpone the application of laws during the term of two legislatures, that is for four years. This compromise satisfied nobody; nevertheless it did represent a

courageous effort on the Assembly's part, for pressure from the tribunes was at its most intense throughout the debates, the partisans of the temporary veto coming in for as many insults as those of the absolute veto.

The danger of using abstract terms was at once made apparent. What did *veto* mean to the people, who had no Latin? For some it signified a tax, which was, needless to say, to be burdensome and unjust. Others thought it was an aristocrat, an enemy of the common people. Virieu overheard the following dialogue between two peasants:

"This veto, d'you know what it is?"

"No."

"Well, suppose you've got your basin full of soup; the King says to you 'Spill that soup'. You've got to spill it!"

Finally there were those who believed the veto was some kind of mysterious document, a sort of special pass which could be bought and by means of which enemies of the people could buy up food supplies. A street orator was heard explaining the famine in these terms: "We're short of bread and here's the reason; only three days ago the King was given these suspensory vetoes and already aristocrats have been buying them and sending grain out of the country." This subtle argument had a great success.

It was in connection with the veto that a secondary but sufficiently curious figure of the revolution made his appearance: this was the *ex-marquis* de Saint-Huruge, a giant with a voice of thunder, a Mirabeau of the street corner, who had formerly been shut up as insane. His oratorical furies, misleading if taken as evidence of his actual courage, were subsidized by the Orléans party. On August 30 he set off from the Palais-Royal at the head of one thousand five hundred men to march to Versailles and force the Assembly to deny the King the veto. He was arrested on La Fayette's order. But he and his gang were to appear again later.

Thus, then, the first attempt emanating from the capital to put pressure on the nation's representatives was nipped in the bud by the commander of the Paris National Guard. On this occasion his firmness, supported by the municipality which forbade meetings at the Palais-Royal, maintained order in Paris

and ensured freedom of action and independence for the government at Versailles. It is important to recall this fact, which tends to be overlooked, in view of what was to follow.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, September 27, at Notre-Dame, there took place the general benediction of the National Guard's colours, with a discourse by the *abbé* Fauchet "On French Liberty". There was a numerous gathering, among them, of course, La Fayette, Bailly and a crowd of members of the National Assembly and delegates of the Paris districts.¹

¹ Archives, C. 198, No. 160.

Chapter 9



THE "DAYS" OF OCTOBER

IN Saint-Huruge La Fayette had been dealing with no more than a man of straw, and the demonstration which he broke up was probably nothing but a feeler.

A far more weighty adversary now appeared on the scene, Choderlos de Laclos, author of the famous novel *Les liaisons dangereuses*, whose original title was *Du danger des liaisons*. He was Philippe's man, his adviser and his inspiration, and without Laclos' support that prince would have been deprived of strength and even of initiative. Laclos was at the bottom of the eventful "days" which were to decide the future course of the revolution: that has been proved beyond question by Emile Dard in the book he devoted to Laclos, and by André Castelot in his *Philippe-Égalité*.

La Fayette was convinced that the disturbances were premeditated. He wrote: "It was proposed to rouse popular passions against the Assembly, thereby making use of the power which had hitherto supported it, to destroy it." Proposed—but by whom? Likewise he said: "The Jacobins wanted to make themselves feared, the Orléanists kept under cover, and the Court, by its faults, helped both of them."

The municipality of Paris and the general staff of the National Guard had received numerous warnings, which had impressed them, of an aristocratic plot designed to frighten the King as to his position and to force him, despite his strong repugnance, to go to Metz. According to the reports the plot entailed nothing less than the arrest of the *duc d'Orléans*, dissolution of the Assembly, carrying off the King, and beheading La Fayette and Bailly. For this purpose the *Maison du Roi* (Household Troops) would be available, as would the Musketeers and *Gendarmes*,

corps which were principally made up of noblemen. Vioménil and Condé would be in command of twenty-five thousand men . . . etc. On the other hand, La Fayette, having had to break up gatherings in which a march on Versailles was being mooted, considered it prudent to establish military posts on the road to Versailles. The deputies complained, "as if supposition of the danger had itself been a means of [undue] influence". The General withdrew his posts.

The *Gardes-françaises*, who had been incorporated into the National Guard, were being tampered with, with a view to getting them to rally round the King. A certain number of these men were quick to seize upon the idea of fulfilling both their old and their new functions. Gilbert wrote to Saint-Priest to put him in possession of the facts, and his letter was used as an excuse to bring the *Flandre* regiment back to Versailles, and as a justification of the move to the town's magistrates. Meanwhile the National Guard of Versailles was being flattered and caressed to avoid antagonizing it, or causing division in its ranks.

It was above all the banquet given by the *Gardes du Corps* (Life Guards) to the officers of the *Flandre* regiment on October 1 which gave rise to suspicion. It was rumoured that the tricolour cockade had been insulted, stamped on; the King and Queen, with the Dauphin, had put in an appearance and the guests, heated by wine, had sworn to die for them. Marat in his *Ami du peuple* was denouncing Bailly, La Fayette, Mirabeau and the National Guard as tyrants. He was demanding "a provisional government [*magistrature*], mute, dictatorial, absolute, to still and silence the plots of the Court and the factions of the people which were disturbing the people of France". It was to last until the completion of the Constitution. Could it have been an appeal to La Fayette, an appeal camouflaged by the accusation of tyranny? But Gilbert was not of the stuff dictators are made of, nor had he any inclination for the rôle.

The pretext for the agitation was—famine. In October, one month after the harvest? An absurdity. But nothing is easier than to spread rumours of trafficking in grain, of corn in large quantities thrown into the Seine, and so forth.

On the morning of October 5, Santerre, battalion com-

mander, an Orléanist tool, suggested to Bailly that he needed a quiet rest in the country. He was recalled by the police standing committee. Bailly returned, escorted by a detachment of National Guards sent by La Fayette. For the tocsin had been sounded and a mob, armed with pikes, invaded the Hôtel de Ville, tore up the papers in the offices, stole two hundred thousand francs in coin and notes (*billets de caisse*), while bands were pouring into the *place de Grève* from the *faubourgs*, overflowing into the streets and *quais* of the whole quarter. There were men, women and, as it were, hermaphrodites, for a certain number were "transvested"—men with painted faces, clod-hopping shoes or top-boots appearing beneath skirts. This horde began by demanding bread, then began shouting "To Versailles!" The ringleader was one Fournier, said to be an American, an ex-planter from Virginia. He yelled "We'll bring the whole blasted outfit¹ back to Paris!" His general staff consisted of Maillard, Hulin and the victors of the Bastille. There was a movement to involve the National Guard.

From nine until eleven o'clock La Fayette was out in the *place*, opposing a formal refusal to this proposal in spite of the guns frequently aimed at him and the threat of "*A la lanterne!*" At eleven he went to the Police Committee room where Fauchet was presiding over a meeting. A young man named Mercier had told the General, "The people are in misery. The Government is deceiving us, you as well as the rest. We must go to Versailles and bring the King back to Paris. If, as they say, he's an imbecile, he'll be deposed, we shall crown his son, you shall be regent, and everything will be better." Was this incidental character one of Laclos' agents? Meanwhile, outside, cries of "Down with the Nation!" were mixed with those of "Bread!" and "To Versailles!" Counter-revolution—or *agents provocateurs*? And who would tire first, the rioters or La Fayette?

"Those hours," wrote Lamartine, "were centuries for him, and his sole choice was between mistakes and misfortunes." A striking summation: for, indeed, to give way was to confess himself beaten by the parties of violence and contribute to the triumph of Philippe and Mirabeau. While to resist was to give the appearance of being hand in glove with the Court, to kill

¹ "toute la sacrée boutique."

his own popularity, compromise his authority with the National Guard, raise up the *faubourgs* against him, and be powerless not only in face of the revolting populace but likewise before the aristocratic counter-revolution of which he was so much afraid.

The uproar went on all the afternoon. Blockaded into the Hôtel de Ville by the mob which crammed the streets, Gilbert could only receive news late and in driblets. First they heard that a small band of women had set off for Versailles. A clever move, suggested by Laclos: Louis would never order women to be fired on. Between four and five o'clock the General was warned that the women were about to be followed by several thousand of the insurgents armed with guns, pikes and two or three cannon (old models, said some; "borrowed" from the Districts, as La Fayette believed). In his two accounts of the October "days" the General asserts that at the moment of getting this news he received an order and two commissioners from the Hôtel de Ville, and that having rapidly provided for the guarding of Paris, he took the road to Versailles at the head of several battalions of National Guards. In point of fact he asked for—he may even have demanded—this order from Bailly. It is certain that he was put under violent pressure: his grenadiers had told him, "*Morbleu*, General, you shall not abandon us!" His troops may have been ready to go without him; or to take him with them by force. At all events he found himself at the head of fifteen thousand men of the National Guard. And "as many brigands and maniacs"—whom Maillard had to keep in hand as best he could while seeming to command them: the said Maillard did, indeed, persuade his female vanguard to throw away their weapons, that they might not appear to threaten the King and the Assembly.

For all that La Fayette tells us, in his *Mémoires*, that he was "overwhelmed with cheers, and that by name, by the crowd of elegantly attired people who lined the terrace of the Tuileries," he was desperate. He was expecting an energetic resistance by the royal troops commanded by professional officers: his own undisciplined rabble and his still raw citizen-soldiers could not be expected to stand up to them. He went forward, in the rain which had started to fall, "pale and dispirited", in the midst of

his staff. "We are going", he said, "to a horrible end. What use will our force be, and can we count on it?"

At *Point-du-Jour* he called a halt, had a meal, and tried to amalgamate his forces, putting "a soldier beside each citizen to make the latter stand fast". He sent an aide-de-camp to Sèvres to see whether the bridge had been cut—it was of wood and could easily be burned—and if there were any defence measures being taken. He did not recover his assurance until that officer returned with the news that the bridge was intact and open. He told himself that the Rubicon (his own word) was crossed and after a pause of some moments he gave, he says "an order that the troops were to push on past whatever might try to stop them", meanwhile detailing two officers to go ahead and warn the King and the Assembly of his approach.

The Constituent Assembly, in a stormy mood, had been in session since the morning. Mirabeau on the tribune had declared himself ready to sign a motion decreeing that *only* the person of the King was inviolable. When he returned to his seat he was heard explaining, "I shall denounce the *duc de Guiche* [captain of the *Gardes du Corps*] and the Queen."

Mounier was in the chair. What exactly was the attitude of that very moderate, far-sighted, but possibly ill-informed man? Ill-informed, that is, concerning the actual situation. Did he, as we are assured by Mallet du Pan,¹ urge Necker to come to the Assembly, there denounce La Fayette's march on Versailles as an outrage which they had the right to deal with by force, and to demand an order forbidding him to advance any nearer on pain of being declared a traitor to the State and criminally guilty of *lèse-nation* if he ignored the order? The Assembly, Mallet believed, would not have been able to refuse; "Necker did not dare try it." Whereupon, it seems, Mounier completely changed his tactics and hastily wrote a note to La Fayette appealing for his help.

For during the General's halt at Sèvres, the advance party of women had arrived at Versailles. Joined by a number of groups from the town, they had invaded the Assembly, behaving in a disorderly and very indecent manner and calling for "our little mother Mirabeau". Others turned on the bishop of

¹ *Mémoires*, Vol. I, p. 184.

Langres, Mgr de La Luzerne, who had taken over the chair when Mounier left with a delegation to the King to ask his sanction to the decrees and for a promise to keep Paris supplied with foodstuffs. One of the women screamed at the Bishop, "Put thy thumbs on the table, *calotin*."¹ Uproar; the bishop declared the session closed.

One group of women tried to get into the castle: there was a skirmish with the *Gardes du Corps* who held the invaders at bay. The Parisians lost one, dead, the Guards had a man wounded, M. de Savonnières. Mounier's delegation was accompanied despite itself by a dozen women determined to see the King. Their leader, Louison Chabry, came over faint. The King supported her, comforted her, kissed her, gave a promise of corn supplies and, meanwhile, all the bread which could be found in Versailles. Finally he placed his own carriages at the disposal of the woman and her companions, for their return, thereby converting them all into loyal monarchists, for they had not expected to meet with such paternal treatment.

On the heights of Viroflay La Fayette met these carriages, decorated with foliage, returning to Paris. At about the same time he received the answer to his message. The King sent to inform him that he had learned of the General's approach "with pleasure" and that he had just accepted his Declaration of Rights to which, in the first instance, he had refused his assent. And, in fact, despite the objurgations of Saint-Priest, who had told him, "Sire, if they take you to Paris tomorrow your crown is lost," Louis had refused to run away.

At first challenge (by scouts) two patrols of *Gardes du Corps* fell back on the Castle. A few shots were fired at La Fayette's advance guard, who did not reply to them. The General dismounted, took his place in the carriage of the Commissioners for the Commune, and asked the Commissioners to defend his good name should he perish. Maillard handed him Mounier's letter calling upon him to succour the King and the Assembly.

Thereupon he remounted, halted his troops near to the *Salle des Menus*, spoke a few words to them and made them renew their civic oath to the Nation, the Law and the King—which they did coldly enough. Nor did they show any more enthusiasm

¹ An allusion to the *calotte*, episcopal style of hairdressing.—*Trans.*

when he informed them that the King had given his assent to the Declaration of Rights.

It was still raining and night had long fallen. The troops moved off again by torchlight. Covered with mud up to his shoulders, La Fayette was received by the Assembly. In the name of all his colleagues, Mounier interrogated him as if he had never written to him. (It seems that the deputies knew nothing of his letter of distress.) What was the reason for this military march? The General made an awkward answer (the interrogation must have seemed singular, coming after an appeal for help), in more or less the following terms:

Whatever the motive [for the march] the Army, having sworn obedience, will impose no law: but, in order not to exasperate it, it might be as well to withdraw the *Flandre* regiment and to get the King to say a few words in favour of the National cockade.

Thereafter he appeared, escorted only by the Commune Commissioners, at the Castle gates. They were closed: *Suisses* uniforms could be seen in the courtyard. There was a parley. La Fayette announced his intention of entering with only his two companions. The Captain, who until then had refused to open the gates, showed his astonishment.

"Sir," said the General in a loud voice, "I should never hesitate to trust myself in the midst of the brave regiment of the *Gardes Suisses*!"

It was after midnight when the gate was opened and La Fayette, so exhausted that he had to be more or less carried by Mathieu Dumas, entered the apartments, which were crowded with people. While the General was crossing the *Œil de Bœuf* a voice was raised—that of M. de Hautefeuille, Knight of Saint-Louis: "There goes Cromwell." Reply: "Sir, Cromwell would not have entered here alone." His appearance, covered with mud as he was, made a singular contrast with the fine raiment of the courtiers, who might well wonder whether he came as a revolutionary or a saviour. Louis XVI was in his study, leaning against the mantelpiece. With him were his brother, the *comte* de Provence, Necker, the archbishop of Bordeaux, Champion de Cissé and d'Estaing. Was it then, or on the morrow and in

even more tragic circumstances, that a gentleman-usher hurrying to intercept La Fayette, cried, "Monsieur, the King grants you a ceremonial entry" (*les grandes entrées*)? Vaudeville, as a curtain-raiser to drama.

La Fayette (hands clasped on his chest): Sire, I do not know how I dare appear before you but, you must know, in me you see the most faithful, the most devoted of your servants.

The King: I know, I know it. There it is,¹ you have done what you could.

La Fayette: Yes, Sire, the most faithful and devoted of your servants. I am come, bringing you my own head to save yours; if my blood must be spilled let it at least be in the cause of the constitutional King, rather than in the ignoble glare of the *place de Grève*.

The constitutional King: it was surely an imprudence to use a word hardly likely to dispel the atmosphere of equivocation. La Fayette then tried to explain his conduct in a few words: he let it be understood that he had been swept out of his depth, that he had nothing to do with the origin of the movement. And he concluded:

"Someone has been distributing a great deal of money."

A Commissioner (who had entered the room and drawn near—speaking solemnly): *Some* money, possibly; but you cannot buy so vast a disturbance: only public opinion can rouse great masses of people.

The King: What, exactly, is public opinion asking for?

La Fayette: Sire, Paris is a prey to famine and is asking that its subsistence be ensured.

The King (astonished, turning to Necker): Did I not, a fortnight ago, do all that was asked of me?

Necker bowed, which may have meant assent.

The King: What more do you ask?

The Commissioners: Withdrawal of the troops summoned to Versailles.

Louis (indifferently): Let M. de La Fayette arrange the business with the *comte d'Estaing*.

The comte de Provence: Note, Gentlemen, that it was not the

¹ The King's actual words were "Que voulez vous, vous avez fait ce que vous avez pu."—*Trans.*

King who sent for the *Flandre* regiment, but the municipality of Versailles.

A Minister, to La Fayette: General, what is the number of your troops?

La Fayette: Thirty thousand men.

The Archbishop of Bordeaux (terrified): Oh Heavens!

The Queen was present at this scene, but in shadow. Torn between the humiliation of being protected by a man whom, at the bottom of her heart, she regarded as an enemy (to what extent did she distinguish La Fayette from Philippe?), and her terror of seeing her husband and children massacred by the populace, she put herself into La Fayette's hands against all her instincts. Madame Elisabeth pressed the General's hand and charged him to guard her brother's life.

For the time being there was no question of replacing the *Suisses* and the *Gardes du Corps* by the National Guard as palace troops. The National Guard was on duty outside. La Fayette posted a battalion near the hôtel of the *Gardes du Corps*, and gave orders to patrol about the Castle and in the town. The rest of the National Guards camped more or less anywhere, mixing with Fournier's men.

Towards midnight the *comte* de La Marck, Mirabeau's friend, accompanied by the *abbé* Damas, visited the Castle "out of curiosity". Entering the room out of which the *Ceil de Bœuf* opened, both of them saw La Fayette talking in a low voice to M. d'Aguesseau, Major in the *Gardes du Corps*, and Jauge, the Paris banker. A few moments later a guardsman entered in a state of excitement and whispered briefly to d'Aguesseau.

D'Aguesseau (aloud, to La Fayette): Monsieur le Marquis, that which I had the honour of warning you of is happening: the people are marching on the *Gardes du Corps'* hôtel and threaten to attack it. It is urgent that you go there immediately and restore order.

La Fayette: I gave orders sufficient for the maintenance of calm. I am overwhelmed with fatigue and I have need of rest.

"D'Aguesseau persisting," wrote La Marck, "La Fayette gave way. He took the *abbé* Damas' arm on one side, my own on the other, and in that order we went down the staircase which

leads to the court of princes." Jauge followed them. La Marck's carriage was waiting. La Fayette asked him to drive him to the *Gardes du Corps'* residence. The *abbé* Damas went off on foot. La Fayette, La Marck and Jauge got into the carriage, but had hardly left the *cour des princes* and entered the *cour des ministres* when they were stopped by a group of plebs, drunk, bawling and armed with pikes.

La Fayette put his head out of the window so that they could recognize him:

"What do you want, my children?"

"The heads of the *Gardes du Corps*!"

"Why?"

"They've insulted the National cockade and stamped on it and must be punished."

"I tell you once more—trust in me. All is going well." Then, in a low voice, he said to Jauge, "Give them three crowns." The effect was immediate: the yelling stopped and the men let the carriage pass.

At a hundred yards from the gate La Fayette got out and La Marck drove home. The General made sure that the *Gardes du Corps'* hôtel was protected by a battalion of the National Guard. He again gave orders to patrol about the château and in the town and then, about two in the morning, went to the royal apartments, where he was refused permission to enter. (After his meeting with La Fayette the King had dismissed everybody with permission to go to bed.) The General went to Montmorin's (the account of this is La Marck's, who had it from Montmorin himself), who questioned him concerning the state of affairs in the town and at the château.

La Fayette: Everything has been attended to. The peace [*L'ordre*] will not be disturbed. I am overwhelmed with weariness. I can barely stand and I am going to take a few hours' rest.

The dawn was near when he arrived at the Hôtel de Noailles where he lay down without undressing.

This rest, for which Gilbert has been so often reproached, lasted one hour at the most. Before the sun rose, drums were beating and there were sounds of a disturbance. Groups were

forming and from one to another, on horseback, went the hunchbacked advocate Verrières and Lecointre, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Paris National Guard. It seems that, having found some entries either badly guarded or not guarded at all, the rioters had got into the gardens without making much noise, and surrounded the château, but at some distance and without attracting too much attention. It seems, moreover, that the first brush occurred when a band coming from the direction of the *place* fired two shots, provoking a return volley from the château. A National Guard was killed. There was a wild rush of rioters. A few *Gardes du Corps* came running up but were overwhelmed by numbers. One of them, des Huttes (or Desuttes), was knocked down, slaughtered, and his head stuck on a pike. There followed the oft-described scenes—descriptions differ a good deal from witness to witness—the royal apartments broken into despite the heroic defence of a handful of *Gardes du Corps* (Varicourt killed, Miomandre de Sainte-Marie wounded), and Marie-Antoinette flying, hardly dressed, to take refuge in the King's apartments by way of a concealed passage, etc.

Suddenly awakened (if, indeed, he had slept), La Fayette at once sent an order to his troops to move on the château at the double. Two companies of the National Guard composed, for the most part, of former *Gardes-françaises* got there before the General, in time to drive off the ruffians about to smash open the doors of the *Œil de Bœuf*. For a moment the besieged did not seem to realize what was happening and hesitated to open the doors: assassins, or saviours?

"Open, gentlemen! We are the *Gardes-françaises* and we have not forgotten that you saved our people at Fontenoy!"

Shortly La Fayette appeared, forcing his way through the crowd. At the gate a mob was preparing to hang a number of *Gardes du Corps* prisoners. He offered his own head for their lives, snatched them from their captors, placed them in charge of the handful of reliable men who were with him and made his way to the château. He found the palace suites occupied by National Guards. The King was in the drawing-room which opens on to the *cour de Marbre*, together with his family and a number of others—Necker and his wife, several ministers, deputies, *Gardes du Corps*, women and the palace servants. With-

out waiting to be thanked, the General went out on to the balcony and heatedly (even, by his own account, "violently") harangued the crowd. Supported by Necker, he advised the King to show himself. Louis agreed and went out to greet the crowd, which cheered him.

It seems that he appeared twice—once, with his family, and then a second time, like an actor recalled by applause; and that he responded to the shouts of "To Paris!" by an affirmative sign. La Fayette, however, in both his accounts, says definitely that he himself "refused to be present at the discussion which had become necessary and at which the King's departure (for Paris) was decided". It would therefore appear that some gesture made by the King was taken for a sign of assent, but that his decision was not taken at once and that there had first been hostile demonstrations, threats, pikes brandished, and guns levelled at the Queen.

Meanwhile the National Guard had occupied three sides of the courtyard; they could not get possession of the middle. So that although the demonstrators were, so to speak, outflanked, they still had their footing up to the very doors of the château and the danger was still serious. After a brief interval of comparative calm, more shouting broke out, whereupon occurred the famous scene, recounted by La Fayette as follows:

La Fayette (to Marie-Antoinette): Madame, what is your personal intention?

Marie-Antoinette: I know the fate that awaits me. But my duty is to die at the feet of the King and in my children's arms.

La Fayette: *Eh bien!* Madame, come with me—

Marie-Antoinette: What? Alone, on that balcony? Did you not see the gestures which they made?

La Fayette: Yes, madame; let us go out.

"And appearing with her, facing those waves which still roared in the midst of a hedge of National Guards filling three sides of the courtyard, La Fayette, not being able to make himself heard, had recourse to a dangerous but decisive gesture: he kissed the Queen's hand. The multitude, impressed by this act, shouted, 'Vive le général!', 'Vive la reine!'"

It was then, apparently, that the always impulsive Mme

Adélaïde flung her arms round La Fayette's neck as he was coming in from the balcony and said, "I owe you more than my own life, I owe you the King's and my poor nephew's."

"And now," Louis asked, "can you not do something for my guards?"

"Send for one of them," La Fayette replied. When the man came he gave him his own cockade, showed him to the people with his hat trimmed with it, and got the reception he had hoped for—shouts of "*Long live the Gardes du Corps!*"—the same guards the same mob had been set on disembowelling a quarter of an hour before.

The King then made another appearance on the balcony. He silenced the shouting by a motion of his hand:

"Friends—I am going to Paris with my wife and children: I shall entrust all that I hold most precious to the love of my faithful subjects."

Yet still he hesitated, thinking of what Saint-Priest had said to him. He tried, next, to create a diversion by asking the Assembly to meet in the château. Mirabeau put his foot down: "We cannot deliberate in the Palace of Kings!"

A deputation waited upon Louis to inform him that the deputies considered their Assembly to be inseparable from the executive power, but all hope was lost. The departure for Paris must take place—and that within an hour. Papers were thrown from the palace windows to inform the rioters of their triumph.

La Fayette was charged with organizing the movement of a column of more than thirty thousand persons. He cut down the danger by "persuading" (he could not command) the people to take the lead, immediately followed by several battalions. There would thus be a more or less reliable buffer between the royal family and that howling mob which only stopped yelling the song of the moment—"*La boulangère a des écus*"—to sing obscene choruses. He himself rode beside the royal carriage, on the Queen's side.

"That was my proper place," he says.

He spoke little during the journey, excepting for a few words to d'Estaing, who was riding beside him, about his own cer-

tainty concerning the part played by the Orléanists in all this business:

"Those people," he said, "will make a royalist of me."

Did he, like the royal family, have to bear the shame of following the piked heads of the decapitated *Gardes du Corps*, which are supposed to have been borne immediately before the carriage?

The tradition that this was so is no longer seriously accepted.

It is understandable that he himself should have said nothing. But the steps he had taken were aimed, among other things, at avoiding anything of the kind, since he had placed what was virtually an army between the rabble and the King. Nevertheless, we have the unpublished *Mémoires* of the *marquis* de Bouthillier, a member of the Assembly, before us; he was an eye-witness, and here is what he says: "I witnessed the frightful march of that unfortunate monarch, dragged prisoner into his capital, preceded by the bloody heads of his own Guards, carried in triumph before him. . . ." By how much, in time and space, did the piked-head bearers precede the royal carriage? We cannot be sure. It is a fact that those trophies did complete the journey, that they were taken into a wig-maker's in Sèvres to have their hair curled, and the sadistic masquerade did not end until Paris, where, it seems, the municipality took a hand to stop it and the lamentable remains were thrown into the Seine.

The National Guards and the *Gardes du Corps* exchanged hats, which must have made some odd figures of both gentlemen and citizen-soldiers: even the revolution had its carnival side. Or was it a true "symbol of anarchy"? As someone was to say, "on that day the men were commanded by women, the soldiers by civilians, and the General by everybody".

But what should have been the last word had already been uttered, six weeks in advance, on July 17 when Bailly was handing Louis the keys of Paris, the very ones which had once been offered to Henry IV. "The city," said Bailly, "has reconquered its King." Nor, henceforth, was it to let him go again: and it was to be La Fayette who would be responsible for watching him.

On the following day Gilbert was visited by one of the Guards captains, the *duc* de Villeroi, who, anxious to pay court to the

rising sun, wished to assure the General that he had taken no part in yesterday's mischief. To which the General made this answer:

"So much the worse for you, monsieur, for the *Gardes du Corps* behaved extremely well."

Chapter 10



AGAINST PHILIPPE WITH OR WITHOUT MIRABEAU

THE apparent victor of the day was obviously La Fayette. Events had turned in his favour and against the Orléanist party. But his victory was as precarious as it was involuntary, and even on the following day he was confessing his discouragement to Châtelet, his aide-de-camp. The October revolution was none of his making, in spite of all that Philippe's friends wrote. Grace Dalrymple-Elliott, for example, who, after stating that the duke dined with her at Monceau on October 5, reports him as saying, in the course of the meal: "It must be one of La Fayette's plans, but I am sure they'll accuse me of it; every disturbance is attributed to me. The project seems like madness to me, like everything that La Fayette does."

Calumny undoubtedly, and uttered with intention, a purpose. The General would have called a halt after the taking of the Bastille. As he was to write subsequently, "The July revolution [was] the only one I wanted and the only one which was necessary." But now events had overtaken him. Already, confirming perhaps a nascent legend, his enemies were calling him *General Morpheus* and *General of the Poppies*. Octave Aubry, in his *Histoire de la Révolution* (p. 146), has, somewhat cruelly, this to say of him: "At heart a republican, by duty a royalist, in fact an aristocrat, he was, despite all his efforts, condemned by his contrasts to appear, throughout his life, an heroic coxcomb."¹ The most exact delineation of him comes from Suleau, the journalist who was the first of the August 10 victims: "He is quite simply an excellent citizen sincerely desirous of his

¹ "*étourneau*", more literally, giddy fellow; perhaps, one who constantly changes direction.

country's welfare, and he would be its firmest support if his political concepts and the energy of his devices for carrying them out were equal to his high purpose"; an opinion which, oddly enough, corresponds with that of the *marquis de Bouillé*, mentioned earlier.

By October 7 his power was enormous. The four companies of *Gardes du Corps* were disbanded. As chief of the Paris National Guard (his command was about to be extended to a radius of fifteen leagues from the capital), he was at once master of the people's armed forces and captain of the sovereign's guard. As is well known, under the *ancien régime*, that exalted functionary could never go far from the royal person without his express permission. An odd Captain of Guards, then: watching over the King and on occasion, keeping a sharp eye on the King—not quite the same thing. At the same time he held a watching brief for his own political self, a special interest in the King in view of his personal policy—to ensure that the sovereign retained sufficient power against adverse forces, factions in the Assembly and the incumbents of the *ancien régime*. These facts made him numerous enemies; but for the time being he was, because of his *popularity*¹ (he was proud of using English terms), obliged to act as arbiter between the people and the King. The people—more precisely, the populace of Paris. It was at the General's instigation that the Commune and the districts sent addresses of loyalty to Louis. And then, suddenly, came open war against those responsible for the disturbances.

Marat first, who had egged on the people to riot. He was, at that time, but a puny fighter: with a warrant out for his arrest, he fled and went into hiding. His paper, *L'Ami du Peuple*, was suspended.

Second, Philippe: but, "my enemies", as Gilbert told Châtelet, "are stronger than I am." Châtelet did not believe there was more than one way of killing a cat: a nice little bit of strong-arm work, a *coup de force* whereby the General was to thrust aside his adversaries and take charge of the Constitution, as of the revolution—

La Fayette: No. I must try everything before being brought to that. I shall try to frighten the duke, or to buy him.

¹ In English in the French text.—*Trans.*

Du Châtelet: It will only be a palliative, but certainly the first is the surer method—and the less costly.

Acting on which opinion La Fayette immediately wrote to the prince asking him to meet him at the Hôtel de Coigny, *rue Saint-Nicaise*.

It seems that, satisfied with having humiliated the Queen, Philippe, the man she was already calling "our red cousin", had lost much of his venom. Also it may be that he had begun to perceive that those who were pushing him from behind, the freemasons, of whom he was Grand Master in France, *bourgeois* envious of the aristocrats, ex-parliamentarians who were enemies of absolute monarchy, were more attached to his money than to his person. He considered it more amusing and above all less dangerous (for he had no more civic courage than his ancestor Gaston in the days of Louis XIII) to busy himself about his young mistress, Agnès de Buffon, while remaining, in the shadow of the throne, a political power to be reckoned with. And to that end any open breach must be avoided.

The General communicated to him a royal order, drawn up in the course of an interview with the minister Montmorin: he was to go to London on a "mission"; it would save his face and protect the duke from the factions which were making use of his name and pledging his responsibility. Accompanied by his friends Biron and Laclos, he would be able to renew his friendship with the Prince of Wales, to whom he was attached; he would remain until the Constituent Assembly had completed its work.

Mirabeau asserts that La Fayette was imperative and the duke resigned. And in fact, at the time, Philippe did accept a solution which contrived for him what amounted to a discreet reconciliation with his cousin. And so he told his friends. They, seeing more clearly, pointed out that he was being sent to London not "to protect him from factions" but simply as an exile. Whereupon the duke wrote to La Fayette to refuse. Whence a further meeting at the Hôtel de Coigny. The General had to make use of arguments sufficiently persuasive to extract a promise that the duke would leave within twenty-four hours. He accompanied Philippe to the Tuileries to inform the King. Louis, having thought the business settled, showed astonishment

—which became stupefaction when he heard the duke say, “I am going to try to discover those responsible for the troubles, in London.”

La Fayette interrupted him.

“You have more interest than anyone else in doing so, for nobody is more compromised than yourself.”

Mirabeau, informed by Biron, started up in a rage.

“M. d’Orléans”, he said, “is quitting the post entrusted to him by his constituents, without consideration; if he obeys I shall denounce his departure and oppose it. If he stays, and if he will reveal the invisible hand which was manipulating his removal, I shall denounce the authority which thus usurps the authority of the laws. Let him choose between these alternatives.”

Thus threatened, and not knowing which was the more to be feared, La Fayette or Mirabeau, the prince took a night to think it over and decided it was Mirabeau. He again, therefore, wrote to La Fayette to say that he was not going. Mirabeau warned the General that the following day he would mount the tribune in the Assembly and speak. Seeing that the business was about to become public and that, in that event, the duke would not be able to leave without dishonouring himself, Gilbert sought him out and summoned him to fulfil his promise.

Philippe: My enemies claim that you hold proofs against me.

La Fayette: Those who say so are, rather, *my* enemies. If I were in a position to produce proofs against you, I should have had you arrested already, and I must tell you that I am seeking such proofs everywhere.

That was enough: Philippe wrote to the President of the Assembly to ask for his passports, which were granted without discussion. He left in the small hours of October 14. During that day’s session of the Assembly Mirabeau told his neighbours that the duke was “as cowardly as a flunkey, a good-for-nothing¹ not worth the pains which had been taken on his account”.

And La Fayette having remarked that the prince’s credentials for London were a “free pardon” (“*lettres de créance*” and “*lettres de grace*”), the witticism made the rounds of Paris.

¹ He used the extremely vulgar expression “*jean-foutre*”.—*Trans.*

The business of October 5 showed the General that if the populace, whoever might be its leaders, was allowed to get the upper hand, all would be lost. At Mirabeau's proposal the Assembly passed a vote of thanks to the commander of the National Guard and the mayor of Paris "for the extent of their labours and their indefatigable vigilance". (Was there, perhaps, a touch of irony in the wording?) Strong in this support, La Fayette became very energetic. On October 21 a baker was killed on the pretext that he had refused a woman bread. Actually, his shop was empty. On the same day there was a movement in the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine to join forces with the *faubourg* Saint-Marceau in getting the price of bread reduced, by force, and breaking into the convents to look for the guns said to be hidden there. The National Guard arrested two ring-leaders, who were tried and hanged the following day.

The General was beginning to experience the inconvenience of a militia force which is never under arms at the moment when it is needed. He was also coming to realize that oath-taking on every occasion was an inadequate method of ensuring discipline. He therefore proposed the formation of one company of grenadiers and another of *chasseurs* to each battalion, which, by doing a four months' turn of duty on a rota system, would provide a permanent force. As he said, in his speech to his officers, "I should prefer a small number of men with whom, at any moment, I could surround myself, to a large number which I am unable to muster." The wisdom of this cannot be questioned. On October 24 a deputation led by the commander of the Saint-Roche battalion came to take the special oath required of the four hundred National Guards enlisted, in writing, for this extra duty. Gilbert had, even, somewhat to check the zeal of his troops, who were inclined to deal a shade roughly with anyone who criticized him in public.

Abandoned by Philippe, Mirabeau was looking for an ally. His first idea was *Monsieur*.¹ But that prince was not long in disappointing him: the Favras affair, although still obscure, was some kind of conspiracy to make the *comte* de Provence regent. The King was to be taken, with his consent or by force, to a provincial town, while his brother was to take over his

¹ The King's brother, next in age to himself.—*Trans.*

prerogatives in Paris, thus ousting the *duc d'Orléans*. The intrigue seems to have been made all the more complicated by the fact that some of the royalists involved, possibly inspired by the Queen, believed that they were working for Louis XVI, delivering him from the Assembly and helping to restore his absolute power. Whatever their exact plan, the conspirators would have been up against La Fayette and the Paris Commune; so that the General and the mayor of Paris were to have been the first two victims. Assassinated? So it was said. Arrested? Quite certainly; and since not a trace of complicity on the part of the regular troops has been found it seems likely that the conspirators were to some extent counting on revolutionary elements.

According to a note written by the *marquis de Bouillé* in London eight years later after a conversation with Mme de Balbi, whose relationship with *Monsieur* is well known, the plot organized by the *marquis de Favras* was given away by the *comte de Luxembourg*, captain of Louis XVI's guards, who seems to have taken part in it but who, realizing that he was being watched, lost his nerve and informed La Fayette. The General made use of the information to disturb *Monsieur*, succeeding so well that the prince let himself be persuaded by Mirabeau to go to the Hôtel de Ville and vindicate himself against an accusation which nobody had made.

What precisely was La Fayette's part in the trial which ended in the conviction and execution of Favras? "I have", wrote Mallet du Pan, at that time editor of the *Mercure de France*, "been assured that M. de La Fayette had written to the judges,¹ who seemed to be hesitating, that he could not answer for their lives and would be forced to hand them over to the people if they did not bring in a death sentence. . . ." And Bouillé, in the note quoted above, wrote that "*Monsieur's* terror lasted until the death of M. de Favras, whom M. de La Fayette had executed to intimidate the prince and those aristocrats who were ready to rally round him."

A serious accusation. *Monsieur* only cleared himself of it indirectly in a note which he left on the subject and which is as follows: "The *lieutenant-civil* and the public prosecutor having called upon M. de La Fayette about some details relating to the

¹ Literally "to the law-courts" (*Châtelet*).

tribunal service, he took the opportunity to say to them, 'God forbid that I should suspect the Paris law-courts of being influenced by fear; but such fear would in any case be unnecessary cowardice, for there is no danger whatsoever, and whatever your judgment, it will be carried out'."

Guilty or not, Favras died bravely and without having revealed anything, and the *comte* de Provence seems to have shown, at the execution, a joy which might well be called indecent. As for Mirabeau, who, even before the trial, had realized that *Monsieur's* character was weak, had opened negotiations with La Fayette in October (1789) with the idea of making his own use of the General's popularity.

In his *Histoire de la Constituante* (p. 181), Alexandre de Lameth records that the initial meeting took place at the Passy house of one of Mirabeau's nieces, Mme d'Aragon. Lameth was present with his friends and Laborde de Méréville; La Fayette was with Latour-Maubourg. Mirabeau having made a violent attack on the Queen (it will be recalled that, in the Assembly, he had demanded that *only* the King be declared inviolable), La Fayette declared that anyone wishing to be allied with himself would have to give up persecuting the Queen. To which Mirabeau replied, "Very well, General, since you wish it, let her live! A humiliated queen may be useful, whereas a queen with her throat cut is no good for anything except to inspire a bad tragedy by poor Guibert."¹

The plan discussed entailed "a ministry selected from the Assembly, capable of leading and dominating it". But La Fayette did not want Necker to be excluded; he persuaded him, with difficulty, to see Mirabeau. Necker was "excessively pained by the business, but he was at the end of his tether . . . and beginning to see that, if he was not careful, the King would be forced to agree to his dismissal."²

Moreover, while Gilbert was hesitating to ally himself with Mirabeau, Necker, feeling that his own position was undermined, was intriguing to keep himself in office by leaning on

¹ *Comte* de Guibert, author of military works, notably a famous treatise on tactics, and of several *Tragedies*. He died the following year (1790).

² *Correspondance* of La Marck, Vol. I, p. 385, October 17, 1789—"On sera réduit à accepter son départ."

La Fayette. Furious, Mirabeau wrote to the General: "If you have given thought to the perfidious collusions of the ministers with the brutal, or rather the truly frenzied pride of the contemptible charlatan who had brought the throne of France within an ace of ruin and who is persisting in ruining it rather than admit his own incapacity to himself, you [can] no longer believe that I could possibly be in any way their auxiliary."

Had Necker been the only obstacle to the La Fayette-Mirabeau alliance, it would indeed be a melancholy thought that, out of an excess of loyalty to the man whom Lavaquery rightly called "the harbinger of the revolution", La Fayette had refused to work with the one man capable of saving something of the monarchy. But Gilbert was utterly wanting in that political sense which "the monster" possessed in the highest degree. To act effectively in the course of a revolution it is necessary to have at one's disposal a disciplined and organized armed force. Such Gilbert had, or at least could have had, in the National Guard. But he had not the intelligence, or the abnegation, to put that force at Mirabeau's disposal. He saw no possible agreement between their ideas. Nor indeed did Mirabeau, who, at bottom, despised La Fayette because he saw that La Fayette despised him. The people's tribune had called Necker a "little great man" and La Fayette a "sub-great man", by which distinctions he implied an important difference. There was nothing to be done with the Genevese, whom he considered a nonentity and whom he thought, in any case, played out. But something might possibly be done with the other. It is easy to guess that Mirabeau, who considered himself the whole great man, might look upon Gilbert as capable of becoming an active and quickening element in the new regime.

And from October 19, thirteen days after the King's return to Paris, he held out his hand to Gilbert: "I forget no single one of my hypotheses in the matter of discoveries [*it was a question of discovering the authors of the riot*]. Whatever happens, I shall be *voe votis* until the end because I have been strongly drawn to you by your great qualities, and it is impossible for me to cease taking a very keen interest in so splendid a destiny and one so

closely attached to the Revolution which is leading the Nation to liberty."

On the same day La Fayette said to Mirabeau, whom he invited to dinner at his house; "You must not think that there is any responsibility I am avoiding, and since dishonour is not a thing I would consider [*n'existe pas dans mes calculs*], the only alternatives I have before me are the Revolution, or my life."

And so, indeed, it was: all or nothing. Mirabeau, on the other hand, was certainly ready to risk his life, but only if it served some purpose and, if he succeeded, as he expected to do, primarily his own purpose. There were constant disagreements.

"Yesterday, late, I saw La Fayette," the tribune wrote to his friend La Marck. "He spoke of the place and the pay [the Constantinople Embassy]; I refused: I should prefer a written promise of the first major embassy; a part of the pay is to be advanced to me tomorrow." (*With Mirabeau there was always talk of money; with Gilbert, never. True, La Fayette was very rich, whereas all Mirabeau ever inherited were debts.*) "La Fayette is very anxious about the duc d'Orléans who may or may not want to return, but who, he thinks, wants to return; it is important to me to be in a position to give him news. He values gossip above good advice. . . . The republic¹ is utterly lost if we do not all make up our minds to the necessary conclusions. If a thousand louis seems to you indiscreet, do not ask for it, but that is the amount I urgently need."

The outcome is recorded in a letter from La Marck to Mirabeau (October 28): "La Fayette will send you fifty thousand francs". The General seems to have manipulated the situation by making use of Necker as a scarecrow. "What would you say," he wrote, in a letter probably intended for La Marck, "if M. Necker threatened to resign in the event of Mirabeau coming in? Reflect on it. I will call on you when I leave the Assembly. Mutual confidence and friendship—these are what I offer and hope to receive." Now, he knew perfectly well that, on his own side, as well as Mirabeau's, nothing of the kind was possible.

Suspicious, dissembling, but never treacherous, La Fayette

¹ Mirabeau, like other leaders of the Revolution, usually puts the Latin into French—"chose publique".—*Trans.*

did not make use of what he knew about the deputy for Aix,¹ which, had he done so, would have been enough to ruin him. Because of this generosity—or prudence—there were further negotiations between them, although all of them without result, since the General became more and more reserved. Exasperated at last, Mirabeau finally sent to the Court what amounted to an indictment in which he denounced the, so to speak, congenital weakness of La Fayette, “who only wins people over because they do not take the trouble to understand him thoroughly, and whose strength (and force)² will never be of any use, since to retain them he will always be obliged to swim with the tide of the multitude”. The fiery orator brought out an aspect of the matter already evoked apropos July 14: the imposition, by Paris, of its views, on the whole country. “To put M. de La Fayette into the Government (if there is, in fact, any question of forming a ministry including him or under his presidency) *would be to try bringing the whole kingdom into accord with Paris, whereas the one means of salvation must be to bring Paris back into line with the kingdom. . . .*” And in a second letter on the same subject: “As for a plan, he has none; as for means, those he receives from the hands of each new day.³ His policy is to create such a fermentation in everyone about him *that he is allowed to retain the power to extend the influence of the Paris populace over the whole kingdom.* The only resources which he has for this kind of thing are the imbecility of his character and the exiguous dimensions of his brain.”

The furious rage of a disappointed mind; but a mind which, in politics, saw far more clearly than La Fayette what must be the consequence of that primacy of Paris instituted by the Chief of the National Guard and which was to become more and more imperiously manifest.

Yet the man whom he had thus judged so ill, and not without a certain measure of unfairness, was by then such a power in the

¹ Mirabeau.—*Trans.*

² This memorandum is so ungrammatical that it may mean, by “force”, either his personal prestige or his National Guards.—*Trans.*

³ This is not a mistranslation: Mirabeau’s words are “il les reçoit de la main de chaque journée”—to which the authors add (*sic*). The meaning is clear, however curious the language.—*Trans.*

State that a little later Mirabeau again summoned him to work with himself, the tribune, against the dangers which threatened, and which he enumerated. All, that is, but one; for in the midst of those dangers he had, he confessed, "forgotten the greatest of them, the inaction of the only man who could forestall them. . . ."

But La Fayette was a creature of ice, a visionary whose vision was Washington. And since Washington had had no Mirabeau—why, then, nor would he, no matter what happened.

A final meeting between the *comte* and he whom the *comte* no longer called *marquis*, but Gilles Caesar, lasted three hours. After which Mirabeau wrote to the Queen: "He [La Fayette] has been walking more closely in Cromwell's footsteps than becomes his natural modesty."

La Fayette's most serious mistake was that of failing to grasp, as Mirabeau had grasped, the rhythm of the revolution, which had become a race in which he was sure to be outstripped. Can it really be that he said, "I have vanquished the King of England in his might, the King of France in his authority, the people in their fury. I shall not yield to Mirabeau"? It was the tribune himself who reported the words to his friend and colleague Frochot. But if we recall the circumstances in which they were uttered—the final breach between La Fayette and the deputy for Aix—we may properly conclude that the words were not the expression of such overweening pride as his biographers and so many others, friends and enemies alike, have attributed to him.

Chapter II



FEDERATION 1790

ALTHOUGH kept in Paris by his duties as Commander of the National Guard, La Fayette influenced all the important decisions of the Assembly, the royal veto, the right to make peace or war, the abolition of hereditary titles, more or less directly or through his friends. Almost the only business in which he took no part—at least outwardly—was the religious question. Indifference? Certainly not, in so far as it must have political repercussions. Prudence, then? Possibly. It would almost seem that he could foresee the tribulations which this subject was to cause him, as a source not exactly of disagreement, in his home, but of a divergence of views. And the only one, as between Adrienne and himself. Most of his friends voted for the civil constitution of the clergy (and therefore against Rome)—the obstacle which prevented any union between Louis XVI and the Revolution.

The Belgian rising, interesting as it appeared to him, did not distract him from what was happening in France, despite the efforts of Dumouriez, who wanted to see him playing a leading part in it: but it was even less like the American insurrection than was the Parisian one. His right-wing opponents took him to be far more revolutionary than, in fact, he was, or than his situation made him appear. He was thought of as the King's gaoler, whereas he was, as yet, no more than a sort of supervisor and adviser—although, indeed, a somewhat imperious one. He was in the habit of dictating the King's behaviour in terms which were almost comminatory and of an imperturbable optimism. "Nothing [must be done] but through liberty and the people. Any other system will alienate your servants, myself first of all." He sent the King a memorandum of his constitutional monarchy

plan, and a list of the obstacles to its realization—the aristocratic and “Orléanist” factions, the latter swollen by recruits from the ranks of the King and Queen’s personal enemies; and of all who wanted to set up a confederation of republics in France and who were subsidized by foreign money. His object was to achieve a union between King and people, and to that end he claimed the monarch’s unreserved confidence. Louis found this paper somewhat vague, but recognized its loyalty. Having accepted it, he proposed giving the General a written undertaking to that effect. To which La Fayette made answer, “No, Sire, your word is enough.”

To his anonymous confidante—sex unknown—Gilbert wrote: “. . . the King and Queen are just big children who will not swallow the medicines which are good for them without being frightened by tales of werewolves.¹ . . . You are right to sympathize with me for having so awkward a charge as the King. The Queen and he are obsessed with suspicion and aristocratic notions.” He pushed Louis into making a number of striking democratic manifestations: reviewing the National Guard; personally ordering the demolition of the Vincennes dungeon. . . .

Gilbert’s principal preoccupation was with the *duc d’Orléans* who, in fact, was planning to return and therefore keeping himself well and accurately informed on what was happening in France. Thus, Philippe learned that, on February 4, the King, forestalling pressure by the “wild men” (“*enragés*”), had paid a visit to the Assembly, a visit which that body, afraid of the still predominantly royalist opinion of the country, had been calling for. The *Constituante* hoped to get the monarch’s personal approval of their labours. At the same time the visit was a democratic demonstration behind which we can detect the hand of La Fayette. In fact the speech which the King, standing, dressed in black and accompanied by his ministers, read to the Assembly, although written by Necker, was inspired by La Fayette: “The time has come for me to associate myself more closely and in a more definite and manifest fashion with all that you have concerted for the advantage of France. . . .”

After the King had left, the Assembly took yet another oath

¹ Presumably a maternal threat, to crush disobedience. In England it used to be policemen!—*Trans.*

to "the Nation, the King, the Law, and the upholding of the Constitution" (which did not yet exist). But this time there was a sanction. Those refusing to take the oath could hold no public office nor exercise any public function.

Philippe, informed of the event, hastened to write adhering to this manifesto, and adding, "I do not think there is any need for me to tell your Majesty what happiness I experienced in seeing your Majesty approve and consecrate, by your initiative of the 4th, those principles which have always been my rule and have always governed my *behaviour*." This by no means suited La Fayette, especially since La Luzerne, French ambassador in London, had informed him of meetings between the duke and Calonne, an *émigré* of consequence and an ex-minister. So, the General thought, Orléanists and aristocrats are combining to combat the revolution of liberty under the approving eye of the English Cabinet. Letters of information were no longer enough; he must have an agent on the spot. One of his aides-de-camp, M. de Boinville, was chosen and furnished with formal orders: "In the event of M. le duc d'Orléans proposing to return to France, M. de B. is to call on him and say to him, ' . . . M. de La Fayette believes that it is neither in your interest nor his own that you should return to Paris before the end of the Revolution; and since you cannot be other than his enemy, he is bound to tell you so frankly and to say, monseigneur, that from the moment you land [*in France*] he will regard you as such; and should you come to Paris it is his intention to fight you [*in a duel*] the following morning and to vindicate himself on the same day at the bar of the National Assembly. . . . ' "

Not satisfied with this sort of conditional challenge, daring enough considering that it involved a prince who, whatever wrongs he may have done the King, was "of the blood", La Fayette launched a campaign of pamphlets against Philippe, accusing him of plots and denouncing his agents—"Laclos the infernal", Shée¹ "the perfidious Irishman", and Forth "a very Machiavelli".

The attack went even further. In October 1789 the Paris Commune had nominated an investigating committee. On November 23 it indicted those, still unknown, responsible for

¹ Thus spelt in the French text.—*Trans.*

the march on Versailles, before the legal authorities,¹ while La Fayette lodged an accusation concerning the murder of the *Gardes du Corps* and the invasion of the château. So far as the duke was concerned the accusation was moderate, since he was not personally involved in the events. Nevertheless a search for those really responsible might lead to very high places. For all Philippe might cover himself with an alibi, the trial looked like turning out very badly for him. The accusations placed him in a very poor light before public opinion, as well as before the judges. It was soon being said that if he still remained in London it was to avoid having to fight La Fayette, against whom his friends Laclos and Biron never stopped inflaming him.

The principal object of the National Guard Commander was to keep the duke as far away as possible until after the *fête* of the Federation, first anniversary of July 14, 1789. He wanted it to be as solemn as possible and expected it to have a great unifying effect which might well be marred if Philippe were present. Philippe, on the other hand, was anxious to return in time to be present. He endeavoured to soften and win over La Fayette by singing his praises to M. de La Luzerne. Finally, on June 25, he announced in a letter to the King that he would return on July 3.

Mirabeau's view was that he should be well received. Not so the General. Excepting the challenge to a duel, he put his plan into operation. At his order La Luzerne and de Boinville called on the duke on the morning of July 3. De Boinville begged the duke to postpone his return for a short while, "by reason of the dangers which he might meet with in Paris".

Philippe: Those dangers can only hasten my departure.

Boinville: The state of public opinion is such that, to his great regret, M. de La Fayette would be forced to declare himself your enemy; if you would put off your departure for five or six weeks, he undertakes to arrange the most brilliant reception for you.

Philippe: Very much obliged to him, but that is enough; my honour is involved in being in Paris on July 14.

Boinville: Your decision is a grave one; you will cause disturbances in Paris and the whole kingdom; the disturbances raised in your name may even place the King's life in jeopardy,

¹ *au Châtelet.*

... M. de La Fayette has given me an abstract of the informations laid against you at the Châtelet and has instructed me to ask you to be good enough to read them on condition that you subsequently return them to him.

Philippe sent de Boinville into an adjoining room and remained alone with La Luzerne. A few seconds later he recalled the aide-de-camp:

Philippe: Here are the papers, monsieur. I have just talked with the ambassador and I do not think it possible to delay my departure beyond the exact date which will enable me to arrive in Paris on the 14th, that is not beyond the 11th, unless I receive, before that date, an order from the National Assembly. Until then I am reserving full freedom of action to do as I please, but I will keep M. de La Fayette informed of my plans.

Boinville: Monseigneur, three months ago M. de La Fayette suspended the proceedings at the Châtelet. . . .

Philippe: I do not thank him for that—on the contrary; and your visit here was completely unnecessary.

Thereupon the duke sent a note to the King and to La Fayette which, at his order, was read to the Assembly on the 6th, and which was an explanation of his behaviour. When he left Paris at La Fayette's suggestion, he said, he had believed that he was by so doing making a contribution to the restoration of order and tranquillity but, being of no further use in London, he thought himself obliged—short of a contrary order from the Assembly—to resume his place among his colleagues.

Accompanied by Laclos, the duke returned to France on the night of July 8/9. On the 11th he took his seat in the Assembly and was cheered by the Left. That evening, at the Tuileries, the welcome extended by Louis and Marie-Antoinette was benevolent, but there were some hostile demonstrations by certain courtiers: as he crossed the dining-room, where the royal dinner was being served, there were cries of "Watch the food!"¹ The ladies turned their backs on him, the gentlemen contemptuously stared, elbowed him rudely aside, and trod on his feet. As he was going down the stairs he was violently insulted by M. de Goguelat. Some witnesses go so far as to say that people spat on

¹ "Prenez garde aux plats"—presumably implying that he was capable of poisoning his cousins.—*Trans.*

him and that he called a meeting of his advisers to decide whether he should ask for satisfaction on the field of honour. They decided against this; but when, thereafter, he did not receive even a formal word of regret from the King and Queen—then, as Lamartine says “anger entered into his heart and did not leave it again”.

La Fayette had been keeping an eye on the preparations for the fête in the Champ-de-Mars. Men and women of every class had mixed together, wielding shovels and pushing barrows with good will, and singing the *Ça ira*. “*Ça ira, ça ira*”—“it will be all right”—Franklin’s customary answer when asked for news of his young republic. But since anything is an excuse for a song in France, the words had been set to a tune beloved of Marie-Antoinette, words, however, which were soon to be altered to express the most ferocious feelings:

Les aristos à la lanterne

Ah! Ça ira

Les aristos on les pendra!

On the 13th La Fayette presented the Assembly’s deputation, on the occasion of the fête, to the King. “It is our delight”, he said, “to revere, in your Majesty, the most splendid of all titles—that of chief of the French and king of a free people. . . .” The King’s reply must have pleased La Fayette and is well worth repeating here: “Tell your fellow-citizens that I should have liked to speak to all of them as I speak to them here through you; tell them that their King is their father, their brother and their friend, that he cannot be happy but in their happiness, nor great but in their glory, nor powerful but in their liberty, nor rich but in their prosperity, and cannot ail but in their sicknesses; see to it above all that my words are heard in the humblest cottages and in the hovels of the unfortunate; tell them that although I cannot go with you into their homes, it is my will to be present there in my affection, in laws to protect the weak, to be vigilant for them, live for them and, if need be, to die for them.”

The day was a day of joy and universal affection. Philippe’s presence did not give rise to the disturbances feared by La Fayette.

It will be recalled that Talleyrand, as bishop of Autun,

officiated in a downpour of rain and a high wind which blew out the torches. The Commander of the National Guard stood upright upon the dais, the point of his sword resting upon the altar. A symbolic although conventionally ritual attitude—the National Assembly had just voted for the civil constitution of the clergy, but the King had refused his sanction. Wearing all the sacerdotal ornaments, Talleyrand limped up the steps to the platform—his episcopal crook came in very handy to lean upon on such occasions! Passing close by La Fayette, he murmured, “Don’t make me laugh.” And, indeed, as the *comte de Sainte-Aulaire* wrote in his *Talleyrand*, “There was, indeed, good cause for laughter, less in the sacrilegious buffoonery of which he was the hero than in the illusions intoxicating the stupid mob.” Cause, too, for laughter in the imperturbable solemnity of La Fayette, stuck there in his hieratic attitude.

After the blessing of the colours—the oriflamme of Saint-Denis associated with the red, white and blue—the hero of Two Worlds became the object of a delirious demonstration by the crowd. A break in the clouds made swords and bayonets gleam, enhanced the colours of uniforms, gold sleeve lace and embroideries. After the oath had been taken by the General and repeated by everyone, he was borne, amidst wild cheering, in triumph. Whoever could get near him kissed his hands, his knees, his clothes, preventing him for some time from mounting his white horse—the horse to which fame had come when the people named it *Jean Leblanc* and which, as d’Hézèques ironically assures us in his *Souvenirs*, received the homage which was lavished upon it with much satisfaction. And we have it from at least one witness that “hardly was he in the saddle than [the people] were kissing whatever they could reach, his thighs, his boots, the horse’s reins, the horse itself”. And Mirabeau, watching this spectacle with disgust, turned to Sieyès and Girardin, “With such a people,” he said, “should I be called to the government, stick a knife in me, for, one year later, you would all be slaves!”¹

Good-naturedly, Louis had allowed the commander of the civic militia to receive all the glory of the day. Was not that

¹ “Avec un pareil peuple, si j’étais appelé au ministère, poignardez-moi, car, un an après, vous seriez tous esclaves!”

enthusiasm, of which the King was not the object, which turned towards the man on the white horse in an atmosphere of apotheosis, the expression of an obscure instinct, an unconscious appeal to leadership? René Benjamin tells us that Louis XVI was a fine horseman and a great man to hounds, yet never appeared on horseback for official ceremonies; he went in a carriage, even on foot, and his prestige suffered accordingly, whereas *Kayewla's* white horse was the cynosure of all eyes. "See!" cried an onlooker, inspired with foresight, "there goes M. de La Fayette galloping into history!"¹

It would seem that the Mohicans, in giving him their nickname, were also among the prophets.

Some attention must be paid to the address given to the General by the delegates from the federations, and to his reply. The address included the wish, somewhat shaded off by the circumlocutory statement, of seeing La Fayette invest himself with that "authority for [the maintenance of] order" which the whole country increasingly felt the need of: "If it were possible that an attempt one day be made to abuse our love of liberty; if it were possible for that love to suggest hopes to the partisans of licence, [yet] reassure yourself: *millions of men are ready to share your dangers.*"

The General's answer, impromptu, by his own account—an unusual thing at a time when all speeches, even in the Constituent Assembly, were written in advance and read by their authors—must have disappointed the delegates, for it ignored that appeal.

"I have often reminded you that the National Guards of France, here united in the persons of their delegates, should not present Addresses excepting to the National Assembly and the King; judge for yourselves whether it would be fitting for me to assent to the so honourable and touching exception you have deigned to make in my favour! . . . I have been overwhelmed by your kindnesses: it only remains for me to wish ardently for that day when, our constitutional labours finished, I shall be left entirely free to dwell upon memories which will always be dear to me since they will remind me unceasingly of my obligations to you, of my respect and of my eternal devotion. . . ."

¹ "—qui galope dans les siècles futurs!"

Hardly the language of a dictator, nor was that to be expected, for had he stepped but a scruple beyond the limits of the power vested in him by law, he would no longer have been a faithful reflection of Washington. And that he could not conceive, though the very liberty he had sworn to protect perish—perish because, in times of revolution, it can only be protected by being suppressed, or at least by a provisional suspension.

Chapter 12



MILITARY MUTINY AND RELIGIOUS WARFARE

THE Federation has frequently been described as a pause in the march of events: the monarchy's last chance, say some historians, to which another answers "impossible alliance", recalling the fundamental opposition between the royal, Catholic tradition and the goal and methods of the Revolution. It was, rather a moment of soaring hope, like that which had occurred at Louis XVI's accession; but of a towering illusion, likewise, which La Fayette shared in the highest degree. Unable to perceive the superficial character of the truce which was only a respite, he tried to take advantage of it to curb the extreme Left. Marat, in a pamphlet entitled *C'est fait de nous!*¹—unsigned incidentally, but its authorship is unquestionable—gave him his opportunity. The pamphlet was an incitement to massacre in which the chief of the Paris militia was picked out as one who, until he could be properly dealt with, must be watched. Malouet answered it in the Assembly. Marat went underground, but his newspaper was soon appearing again, and naming *Motié* (La Fayette) and *Riquetti* (Mirabeau) as enemies of the people.

The General replied by a threatening Order of the Day to the National Guard, which had more the air of being a political speech, and in which he denounced "the daggers of calumny" and "the incendiary writings in public prints and bills"; which had no effect whatsoever, there being a vital difference between the *act* of showing one's strength, and the mere *word* confined to proclaiming it.

The General's strength, almost wholly dependent on his personal prestige, was more or less limited to the Paris National Guard, since he had refused to accept any fresh extension of his

¹ "We're done for!" or in modern usage, "We've had it!"—*Trans.*

command. As for the royal army, deprived of its officers by emigration and indoctrinated by revolutionary agents, it was no longer disciplined nor loyal. Those officers who had not fled the country were denounced or insulted by their men. Political clubs were organized in barracks.

On August 1, 1790, very serious trouble broke out in Nancy, where, provoked by a punishment, the garrison troops mutinied and, moreover, sent delegates to neighbouring garrisons to tamper with other troops and persuade them to disobey orders to put down the mutiny. They sent a deputation with an insolent address to the Assembly, whereupon La Fayette, having had these messengers of mutiny arrested, got a decree passed on August 6 dissolving regimental clubs and ordering an audit of regimental funds. Then the King's Regiment mutinied, seized the official treasurer and forced him to give them the funds, one hundred and fifty thousand francs, which were shared out. Shops were pillaged, military and civil funds robbed, municipal treasury officials being threatened with hanging if they dared to resist. M. de Malseigne, marshal of the camp, charged with getting the men to return to their duty, was seized by the mutineers. The Assembly's decrees were burned and a general looting of the town began.

The *marquis* de Bouillé collected some reliable troops and set out from Metz, where he was in command, to march on Nancy. La Fayette had written to him to act with energy. Such was already his intention, and the battle which ended in his taking the town resulted in five hundred dead. Following which thirty-two of the culprits were hanged and forty-one condemned to the galleys; they all belonged to the Swiss regiment of Châteaueux, the principal one responsible. Martial law was declared and the Jacobins club closed.

On La Fayette's proposal the Assembly passed a vote of congratulation to Bouillé. Louis XVI wrote to him that he regarded his firmness as the anchor of salvation, and offered him a marshal's baton, which Bouillé refused—"not wishing to owe it to the spilling of French blood to which only his duty had forced him". These official recognitions placed Bouillé on a par with La Fayette in the eyes of the revolutionaries and they both, but especially Bouillé, became the *bêtes noires* of the Left. The

General had added his own lyrical congratulations to those of the Assembly, but Bouillé, who had more foresight than his cousin, could see no real way out of the situation and was considering the advisability of getting the King to leave. Meanwhile, at Jalès, an encampment of about thirty thousand men, mostly from the Cévennes, came into existence at what seemed to be the first and vain attempt at armed counter-revolution.

A duel, the motive of which was political, took place on November 12 between Charles de Lameth and the son of Marshal de Castries. Lameth, the better swordsman, was slightly wounded. The scratch, no doubt infected, would not heal and the Jacobins spread the rumour that the tip of de Castries' sword had been poisoned. A good pretext for a disturbance. The Hôtel de Castries was sacked and this demonstration, serious as it was for public order, was not put down. La Fayette, trying to justify himself, set down in his notes that the looting only lasted half an hour and that the National Guard was on the scene in time to prevent the mansion being demolished and fired. A wretched excuse. Nor is the note which follows any better: "This was the only house in Paris devastated during my term of command, and it belonged to the very man among the emigrants whom I liked best." A witticism at the expense of La Fayette and Bailly swiftly made the rounds: "These gentlemen are like the rainbow, they only shine when the storm is over."

The incident was the beginning of La Fayette's decline. Mirabeau, in his secret bulletins to the Court, was denouncing him in prophetic terms: "It is possible that the shame of tolerating insurrection when he has an army of thirty thousand men behind him will ultimately lead M. de La Fayette to open fire on the people. In doing so he will mortally wound himself." And, in the Assembly: "You believe this man to be ambitious? His only ambition is to be praised. Greedy for power? He seeks not its substance but its appearance. Faithful in friendship? He loves only himself and for himself . . ." Mirabeau had a great deal to do with the Queen's hostility to La Fayette.

During the debates on the civil constitution of the clergy Gilbert did not intervene directly. He had, of course (was he

not Washington's disciple?), preached the American system, full freedom of worship, each group or community of sectaries maintaining its own churches and its own clergy. This system was, he admits, rejected by all sides.

Nevertheless he recognized that behind all the intrigues and what he called "errors" there existed a large mass of genuinely devout people attached, in good faith, to the non-juring sect and clergy.¹ He himself wrote (as usual in the third person): "La Fayette had in his immediate circle an unexceptionable example of the fact that this opinion could be allied to sentiments of the most liberal virtue and the most accomplished patriotism." This was, of course, none other than his "chère Adrienne", and it was a fact that this perfect *ménage* split in two over the religious question: while Monsieur resorted to the juror priest to hear Mass, Madame sat under the non-juror whom, incidentally, her husband ought, of course, to have had arrested—whereas at Chavaniac he kept another non-juring priest hidden in his château!

The business of the Théatins church, the hiring of which had been authorized by the Paris Commune, was symptomatic of a similar ambivalence. There "jurors" and "non-jurors" took it in turns to hold services, each having their agreed times. There was a good deal of trouble: the National Guard was obliged to interfere to ensure freedom of worship to the "non-jurors". La Fayette and Bailly, as a mark of their official liberalism, attended a Vespers service celebrated by non-juring priests "under the protection of National bayonets",² and the General was careful to point out that it was the Jacobin ring-leaders who were responsible for the disturbances.

Vain gestures and vain words. This was no mere question of divergent opinions, like a matter of privilege or financial and material interests, but of an absolute and fundamental breach dividing France into two peoples concerning a supernatural

¹ Readers will recall that the clergy were required to take an oath to the nation, that many refused; they are referred to—by analogue with the English revolution, as non-jurors, although in France they were called "refractories".—*Trans.*

² Presumably an attempt to prevent the mob applying lynch law against non-jurors.—*Trans.*

doctrine, a matter of conscience. In short, a schism, the beginning of a religious war.

For the King it meant a final breach with the Revolution. Hitherto he had accepted everything done against him and against his authority. But never would he accept anything which was opposed to the Catholic discipline, contrary to his religious conscience, and which endangered his eternal salvation. Shortly, the Pope would be formally condemning the oath, and Louis, because weariness had driven him to accept, provisionally, the decree which required the clergy to take the oath, would be obliged to consider himself as a guilty, if repentant, son of the Church. To Fersen he said, "I would rather be King at Metz than King of France in such a position. But, patience, it will soon be over."

The idea of leaving for a town on the frontier, whence he would make an appeal to the nation, was not new to him (which was why the name of Metz had at once come to mind). But now he was looking, rather, towards Montmédy, where Bouillé was in command of troops he believed to be loyal. Mirabeau agreed, with his customary violence, with this idea. When one of his friends expressed a doubt concerning the King and Queen's sincerity, "If", he said, "they don't keep their word to me, then I'll turn us into a republic!"¹

It was a solution La Fayette was unwilling to contemplate.

The first practical effect of the clergy oath on the royal family was the departure of *Mesdames* the royal aunts, Adélaïde and Victoire, for Rome. They were not ready to resort to a juror priest for their Easter duty and perhaps, too, they preferred to leave a country which had become uncomfortable for aristocrats. They were stopped at Arnay-le-Duc in the Côte d'Or. To enable them to continue their journey the Assembly would have to proclaim that there was no law to prevent them, but the revolutionary ringleaders seized upon the incident as an excuse to launch their followers into a march on the Tuileries. As on October 5, the mob included men dressed as women. This time La Fayette was ready to use force in time: the National

¹ Literally "*je les f . . . en république*".—*Trans.*

Guard was on the spot, the guns were loaded: the "reds" drew back.

In the Assembly, Chapelier, acting in the name of the Constitution Committee, tabled a project to forbid emigration, "If you pass a law against the emigrants," Mirabeau shouted, "I swear never to obey it".

The tribune, having gone over to the King's side, had the Lameths and Robespierre against him, but he proved the stronger; the project, supported by Rewbell, was thrown out on February 28. But at Vincennes and in the Tuileries a "*journée*", a new day of violence, was in preparation.

Who were the conspirators? Right-wing historians accuse Philippe and the Jacobins; those on the other side are equally sure that the plot was an aristocratic one designed to draw La Fayette out of Paris and keep him shut out. On the day in question there were two actions, one right-wing, one left; one at Vincennes, the other at the Tuileries. Provocation? Or simply coincidence? In any case no order or connection is apparent: in both cases the trouble seems to have started from rumours; for example, that a refuge was being prepared for the King at Vincennes; again—the dungeons must be destroyed as the Bastille was destroyed. Moreau de Jonnès, author of a detailed *Mémoires* on the period, and an eye-witness, considers that "the two extremist parties, aristocrats and Jacobins, co-operated, *although the hatred which they bore each other prevented them from concerting their measures.*

To maintain order in the city and the Government's security, La Fayette began by sending a battalion of National Guards—of which Moreau de Jonnès was one—to the Carrousel; it occupied the immediate neighbourhood of the château and the maze of little streets and lanes which, at that time, extended from the east side of the Tuileries. But, in the confusion, not knowing who his adversaries at Vincennes, in fact, were, "the order to march was issued to the one battalion, out of sixty, which should not have been sent, that of the brewer Santerre, whose demagogic exaltation was known to everyone." It must have been upon learning of this mistake that La Fayette mounted the paid companies of the National Guard on horses and himself set off at their head for Vincennes, galloping through the *faubourg* Saint-

Antoine so preoccupied that he did not even see Moreau de Jonnès' picket present arms—"he, who was never remiss in politeness".

At Vincennes he found about sixty men engaged in demolishing the dungeon, arrested these volunteer navvies and sent them to the *Conciergerie*; then, not finding any other disturbance, turned back to Paris. At the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine he was pulled up short by the city gates, which had been closed behind him, and threatened to blast them open with cannon. Apart from a few shots fired at his staff, there was no open resistance, but at nightfall, as he was crossing the *rue* Saint-Antoine, some men sprang out at him and seized his horse's head, endeavouring to unhorse him; a grenadier drove them back at the point of his bayonet. The General got off without a scratch, but there was a rumour that he had been killed.

Meanwhile, at the Tuileries, the apartments were occupied by several hundred gentlemen; they had only pistols by way of fire-arms, but they had their swords and daggers. Who called them together? This question, like that relating to Vincennes, remains unanswered. It seems that the gentlemen at the Tuileries had been furnished with admission passes, passes which the First Gentlemen of the Chamber had been distributing readily. It seems, furthermore, that Louis was not expecting them and that the noise of this considerable gathering brought him out of his room. He thanked them for coming to save him from an attack, but begged them to lay down their arms and withdraw.

At which moment La Fayette arrived hard upon the news of his own death. He had driven his horse so hard that the moment the General dismounted, covered with mud and running with sweat, the horse lay down on its side. Ignoring the danger, he pushed a way through the armed crowd, "among them", says Moreau de Jonnès, "fifty or sixty in court dress but with gallows faces", and reaching a door at the end of the salon, suddenly found himself in the presence of the King, standing, and alone.

La Fayette (his voice shaking with restrained anger): Sire, while the National Guard and myself are devoting ourselves to your Majesty's service, adventurers, armed like assassins, are brought

into your palace, attracting half the population on their traces in such a fury that nothing can prevent them venting it.¹

The King replied—Moreau de Jonnès did not hear his first words properly—something like, "It is nothing to do with me", but he gathered the sense of what followed clearly: "They are too zealous servants who mistakenly believed that I was in danger; do everything you can to ensure that they come to no harm. It is my wish that all this should go no further and that it should not be talked about."

It seems that La Fayette's irritation was dissipated by the King's calm, his good-nature, and his tone of regal authority. "He spoke", says our witness, "a few words of devotion and protested that he was about to carry out the King's orders."

The gentlemen's weapons were handed over to the National Guards, who broke them in the courtyard "with demonstrations of merriment somewhat wanting in respect for the King's palace and especially offensive to the cavaliers who had been pushed outside very roughly"—thus Gilbert, in his *Mémoires*. And, indeed, if they were really gentlemen, how was it that they put up with this humiliation so tamely? Was the key to this enigma given to Moreau de Jonnès by an old National Guard who told him, "Gentlemen would have let themselves be cut in pieces rather than submit to be treated as they have been. These are no more than a set of poor wretches who have come here to earn a louis, for surely you don't imagine they're anything but common clodhoppers." To which the man added: "I do not like M. de La Fayette, but I am obliged to admit that he has behaved very well tonight and I hope he is now in the way of soon breaking with the revolution."

On the following day the General issued an Order of the Day which was excessively severe on "the heads of the King's household". The *Journal de Paris* having printed a very tendentious account of the night's events, Louis immediately wrote La Fayette the following letter: "M. de La Fayette, I have read, in the *Journal de Paris*, an article which has caused me the utmost surprise. Since it is as contrary to the truth as it is to good

¹ In the text: "dont rien ne saurait arrêter la vengeance".

manners, I am persuaded that you had nothing to do with its insertion in the newspaper, in the columns of which you will, I have no doubt, hasten to disavow it."

La Fayette's reply, dated October 5: "Sire, that which caused only surprise to your Majesty caused me great indignation, for I believed that I could detect in it deliberate malice. I have written to M. Suard to learn from whom he had the notice and, as the senior officers of your Majesty's household have honoured me with a printed correspondence, they will find, together with my disavowal of the article, my reply to their letter, I am, with respect, Sire, etc."

On the 7th, in fact, La Fayette justified his conduct at some length in the same newspaper, involving MM. de Villequier and Duras, first gentlemen of the Chamber, "who had honoured him with a printed correspondence" and who "claim to speak in the names of the marshals of France, general officers, etc." But these polemics threw no light into the real depths of the business, which, like the Favras affair, remains one of the mysteries of the Revolution. In any case it hastened the political decline of the "hero of Two Worlds". After this "day of the daggers" it may be said that, morally at least, he did not again win a single victory, either against the Court or the people. In the eyes of such left-wingers as Desmoulins and Marat, *Blondinet* had sold out to the Court: why, everyone knew he was "the Austrian woman's" lover! But someone was paying for the pamphlets—the Orléanists were, if the pun is excusable, always ready with an easy louis if it would help to confuse the issue between the General, Mirabeau, and the Tuileries.

The men who were known as the Triumvirs—Barnave, Duport and Lameth—did not consider him sufficiently progressive. The aristocracy, which he detested and who abominated him, were calling him fanatic, monster, traitor. Mirabeau was pointing at him as an enemy of the people while denouncing him to the King and Queen as incapable of protecting them, lagging behind the march of events. It was all very well for Marie-Antoinette to turn pale when she heard the cheering which still greeted his appearance on the Carrousel, the hour was approaching when the "general of the poppies" would have nothing to "envy" his cousin de Bouillé. The Jacobins were

already coupling them as equally ripe for the *lanterne*,¹ but La Fayette had the melancholy distinction of being quite as intensely loathed by the "whites" as by the "reds", thereby emerging as easily the most-hated man of the Revolution.

¹ i.e., of course, lynching by hanging from a street-lamp bracket.—*Trans.*

Chapter 13



BOUILLÉ PLANS THE KING'S FLIGHT

THE very name de Bouillé was, between 1791 and 1793, an object of horror to patriots. Most Frenchmen only know it as it appears in one of the verses of the *Marseillaise*, where it replaced the name of Condé in order to make the rhyme:

*Français, en guerriers magnanimes,
Portez ou retenez vos coups.
Épargnez ces tristes victimes
À regret s'armant contre vous (bis).
Mais ce despote sanguinaire [the Emperor],
Mais les complices de Bouillé,
Tous ces tigres qui, sans pitié,
Déchirent le sein de leur mère. . . .*

—the verse in which the poet, Rouget de Lisle, asks his fellow-citizens to spare the foreign soldiers “regretfully taking up arms against you”, but to massacre the emigrant aristocrats of whom Bouillé is thus, most unfairly, made the representative figure.

For indeed he was deserving of something better than that deplorable doggerel, was François-Claude-Amour, *marquis de Bouillé*, La Fayette’s cousin and fellow provincial, born November 19, 1739, at the Château de Cluzel and who, from as early as his twentieth year, distinguished himself in several battles. At Grünberg, in the Seven Years War, commanding a dragoon vanguard, he destroyed an enemy column, capturing eleven guns and nineteen flags. Ordered to present these trophies to Louis XV, he spoke of his comrades’ exploits but not of his own, whereupon the King turned to those who were present, saying, “Gentlemen, he praises everyone and says nothing of himself; nevertheless he greatly distinguished himself, he captured guns and colours.”

Colonel of the *La Feronnays* regiment, he added more laurels

to his name on active service and, at twenty-nine, was appointed Governor of Guadeloupe and, in 1777, Marshal of the Camp to the Governor-General of Martinique and Santa Lucia. As such, he took Dominica from the English in 1778 and served under d'Estaing in the Santa Lucia attack. On two occasions he repaired errors of judgment on the part of his superior during the American campaign and the troops trained by him were, by a great deal, the best.

Knight of the King's Orders, as disinterested as La Fayette but more meritoriously so, since his fortune was smaller, he refused to allow the debts he had contracted during the War of Independence to be repaid for him. He was a member of both Assemblies of Notables, then Commander of the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine and Franche-Comté. In 1790 he was general commanding the army of the Meuse, Sarre and Moselle and, as we saw, put down the rising in Nancy. He was fifty-one years old, had much experience of war, and troops he could count on. He had shared the "American" ideas of his juniors but, since the outbreaks of violence in July and October, and especially since the military mutinies, he had been turning away from dangerous utopian notions. He could not bring himself to swallow that article of the *Declaration* which represented insurrectionary action as a sacred right, despite the numerous "ifs" and "in the event of's" with which his cousin had surrounded a clause which, in France, above all in Paris, was particularly dangerous. Nevertheless he saw clearly that the *ancien régime* was over and done with and that the struggle must now be to retain, for the King, as much power as would make a paternal and moderate monarchy possible.

Bouillé, in his own person and because of his army, was a force to be reckoned with. La Fayette had long realized that he was not a man to have against one. If he succeeded in converting his cousin to his own point of view, then his power would be greatly enhanced by the addition of Bouillé's. If, on the other hand, their ways diverged, La Fayette felt that he would be lost. Having come to which conclusion he made advances to his cousin, and wrote to him in these terms: "You are the saviour of the *chose publique*. Our union, my dear cousin, is a means of serving it which is very dear to my heart. . . ."

Bouillé considered the praise bestowed on his behaviour exaggerated. "It seemed", he had written, "that I had saved France by my talents, whereas I had been no more than the instrument of Providence in saving her from destruction." The constant stream of oaths which La Fayette administered to the National Guards was viewed by his cousin with distaste. "—Object of derision to all classes", he said, and "One of M. de La Fayette's little ways of alienating the soldiers from their own chiefs and disgusting the officers to whom the decree gave freedom to quit the service if they did not wish to take the oath."

On September 15 Gilbert sent Bouillé his aide-de-camp Desmottes on the pretext of exchanging information. His real reason was to try to bring the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the East over to his own side. "I am deeply touched by the friendship you show me; our union, our mutual confidence, are, at this juncture, the most important means of salvation. It is with all my heart that I yield myself to a sentiment which has become all the more necessary to me as the scarcity of men of integrity becomes increasingly apparent to me."

Bouillé, however, had far more insight into the realities of party politics than his cousin: "He [La Fayette] was more occupied in covering himself against the Royalists, who were powerless, than in crushing the Jacobins, his real and more formidable enemies." He regarded Desmottes as the General's spy. Even so, he dared not refuse to accompany that officer on his tour of inspection. Now, Desmottes had orders to distribute a circular to the municipalities, National Guard commanders and to the chairmen of political clubs. So that, willy-nilly, Bouillé found himself associated with his cousin's propaganda policy. In the course of the tour he received another letter from La Fayette informing him that, following the Assembly's decree on the October troubles, "the Orléans party" was trying to compromise him (La Fayette), paying pamphleteers and "motion-eers" and that "the prince is practising by breaking eggs with pistol shots"—from none of which occurrences was La Fayette expecting serious consequences, "especially if the King spends more time in Paris"—he was then at St Cloud—"to

put a stop to the intrigues arising out of the absurd rumours of his departure". The letter ends, "I have the pleasure of letting you know that the aristocrats have withdrawn their embarrassing friendship from you since you saved the country at Nancy."

In cauda venenum. The letter, tendentious in its deliberate want of precision, was diplomatic enough. But Bouillé was also a diplomat; he was well able to read between the lines what his cousin was after. And knowing him to be suspicious, secret, and above all an absolutist in his ideas, he did not try to convert him. The letter made one thing clear to him: he was, with La Fayette and the Minister of War, La Tour du Pin-Gouvernet, an object of hatred to the Jacobins, who were calling for their three heads—a very much more serious matter than the aristocratic pinpricks. Naturally Bouillé said nothing of what was passing through his mind to Desmottes; the aide-de-camp, however, guessed the other's thoughts and communicated his impression to La Fayette, who was quickly convinced that his advances were in vain.

It was after this tour of inspection that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the Meuse, having given up hope for the King "whose chain was shortened every day", concluded that only one recourse remained—not, indeed, to re-establish the old monarchy, it was too late for that—but at least to save something of it, to give the King back his freedom, a part of his dignity and a few rags of his old authority. To that end he envisaged involving the Emperor, at that time France's ally, by urging him to raise the question of the rights of those German princes who held lands in Alsace and Lorraine, rights which had been flouted by the Assembly's decrees. This would give rise to troop movements on both sides of the frontier. The *Départements* of the two provinces were then to present an address to the King asking him to come and place himself at the head of his army in order to put an end to the spirit of indiscipline among the troops; Bouillé was to put forward the same request himself, and to arrange for his men to do likewise. The Assembly would not have been able to refuse, especially since among the articles of the Constitution already ratified was that which made the King supreme commander of the land and sea forces.

Bouillé had discussed this project with some of the administrators of *Départements* and had obtained their approval, when he received a letter in the King's own handwriting, reiterating Louis' sentiments of esteem. The letter was brought to him by Mgr d'Agoult, bishop of Pamiers, acting for the King and entrusted with an extremely important verbal message as well. After having described the royal family's situation, which La Fayette's harshness was making daily less tolerable, Mgr d'Agoult explained to Bouillé the plan which had been made to "leave Paris and go to some frontier place within your command and to be chosen by you. There he would rally to him such of his troops and subjects as had remained loyal; he would try to reclaim the rest of his people, misled by factions, and would not fall back on the support of his foreign allies unless other means were insufficient to restore peace and order".

Bouillé did not approve of this project: its fault was that it placed the King in an illegal position. If, as was to be feared, it failed, the monarchy would be lost and the King's very life in danger. Consequently Bouillé suggested his own plan to the bishop—the plan explained above. But Mgr d'Agoult then informed him that the Emperor Leopold and the other allied princes were insisting that the King must leave Paris and resume possession of his entire freedom before they would do anything to help him. "Whereupon", Bouillé says, "there was nothing to be done but to resign myself and obey."

As the plan was not to be carried out until the spring of 1791, the King was leaving the *marquis* de Bouillé ample time to make preparations and submit his detailed plans for the King's approval. It was agreed that his correspondence with the Tuileries should be in cypher; and that Bouillé was to be kept informed (which he was during the next eight months) of the King's situation and intentions. Prudence caused him to burn all letters as soon as he had read them, first learning anything essential in their contents by heart.

In December 1790 Louis let it be known that of the three frontier towns suggested, Montmédy, Besançon and Valenciennes, he would choose Montmédy. He sent Bouillé orders to be prepared to receive an army corps there in the spring. Bouillé,

on his side, was accusing La Fayette of having drawn closer to the Jacobins and of doing all in his power to restrict his cousin's field of action now that he had given up the idea of winning him over. A personal letter from the King informed Bouillé that a few days after the change of ministry, with the consequent replacement of La Tour du Pin by Duportail, there had been a motion, for which La Fayette and left-wing leaders in the Assembly were responsible, to withdraw Bouillé's right to make movements of troops within the provinces included in his command, entirely on his own authority.

Louis, being in Paris, was able to estimate the strengths of the parties. He asked Bouillé whether he considered the matter one of great importance; the *marquis* replied that it was imperative. The King then wrote that he had come up against such determined opposition from the Minister (Duportail) and La Fayette that he had been forced to give way.

Nevertheless the project of the King's departure was not dropped, and at the end of January 1791 Louis let Bouillé know that he was hoping to carry it out in March or April and asked him to suggest a route. Bouillé suggested two: by way of Reims and Stenay; or through Châlons, Sainte-Menehould and Varennes or Verdun. The latter town was rejected on the grounds that its municipality and population were hostile, and Varennes was chosen although it had no post-horses; this was a serious inconvenience, but it was absolutely necessary to avoid Reims, the city in which the Kings of France were crowned and where, therefore, Louis was too well known.

Bouillé insisted that the King ask the Emperor to make a feint with a body of troops towards the frontier of Luxemburg, so as to have an excuse for mustering troops in that direction himself. Louis replied that he had Leopold's formal promise to set twelve or fifteen thousand men in motion as soon as he was asked to do so.

It should be made perfectly clear that neither the King nor Bouillé had the slightest intention of having France invaded by the Imperial troops, their only object being to have a motive for moving their own troops. If there was anything else in their minds in connection with these manoeuvres, it was no more than this: the presence of the foreigners would be a kind of moral

pressure favourable to honourable negotiations between the King and the Assembly.

The sovereign warned Bouillé that he was an object of suspicion now to all political parties, that La Fayette in particular was jealous of him, and that the question of depriving him of his command in Alsace to give it to General Luckner had been raised. Faced with this prospect Bouillé judged it wiser to resign that part of his command on his own initiative, but he begged Louis to do all he could to get a man in whom he had confidence, namely General Gelb, appointed. Gelb was, in the event, and despite the efforts of La Fayette and Duportail, given the command. By this means, although through an intermediary, Alsace remained at Bouillé's disposal.

In early February 1791 Louis sent the *comte* de La Marck to the Commander of the Army of the East. La Marck was a friend of Mirabeau, henceforth in the Court's service, but Bouillé had never had any dealings with the tribune of the people. La Marck was not aware that the King had informed Bouillé of his "conquest" of Mirabeau, and therefore himself told the story in detail, including the price of the royal victory: six hundred thousand *livres* down, and fifty thousand a month, not to speak of promises of more according to services rendered. La Marck added that Mirabeau was a good deal worried at the idea of a liaison between Bouillé and La Fayette, whom he regarded as one of the most determined opponents of his own projects. This was, no doubt, the principal reason for La Marck's mission.

Bouillé replied that the tie between himself and his cousin was more apparent than real and that he had, at that very time, much to complain of in regard to his cousin's treatment of himself. And he added, "I have always thought that Mirabeau had the genius, the talent, and the character required by such great circumstances; he may count absolutely on my efforts to second his plans."

La Marck then explained the tribune's plans to Bouillé: to have an Address presented by the *Départements* calling for the dissolution of the Assembly and the convocation of a new one, invested with the powers required to enable it to change the

Constitution of the old kingdom (the States General of 1789 had only been elected to deal with the Treasury deficit), and to restore the King to a more seemly condition of freedom and authority. Mirabeau was counting on the support of a Paris *rid*, by himself, of the principal faction leaders, most of them Jacobins, and of thirty-six *Départements*. Bouillé, for his part, could count on six *Départements* and, independently, on numerous royalist members. He would receive the Royal Family at Compiègne or Fontainebleau, where he would have concentrated the pick of his troops.

Bouillé was counting on Mirabeau's ambition and greed: the King, once restored to his throne, would be better able to satisfy them than would a party leader whose power could only be ephemeral. Whereas he thoroughly distrusted La Fayette, whom he took for "an enthusiast, a madman, drunk with self-love, whose depths could not be known or sounded; the most dangerous kind of man, especially in a revolution".

Gilbert probably knew of La Marck's approach to Bouillé, for he wrote his cousin a long letter of which only the postscript need detain us here:

"There are many people turning over great projects in their minds; but they are the fruits of petty ambitions: I shall let you know what I think of them as I get to know about them. As for the men of integrity like ourselves, it is up to us to go straight towards a useful and known goal; all these mysteries and intrigues help none but rascals; as all the chimæras conceived by weak heads help their enemies."¹

From this it would seem that the General knew, or suspected, Mirabeau's plan. That hint was the only substance Bouillé found in his cousin's letter. Knowing that, on the day following La Marck's departure for Metz, La Fayette had had a three-hour conversation with Mirabeau, Bouillé went so far as to wonder whether a triumvirate consisting of the tribune, La Fayette, and himself could not save the realm by combining their forces. . . .

As it happened, Mirabeau had only two more months to live.

The Assembly having revoked the decree which forbade

¹ La Fayette's punctuation retained.—*Trans.*

soldiers to take part in political club meetings, discipline, within a few months, suffered severely. Even so, at the beginning of May Bouillé believed that he still had his troops well in hand. And he pushed on with the preparations for the King's escape, constantly checked, however, by more and more serious difficulties.

Chapter 14



VARENNES

A WHOLE network of decisive events was crowded into the spring of 1791. Possibly the most important was the death of Mirabeau, worn out both by his excesses and his oratorical labours.

Although he had quarrelled with La Fayette, the tribune had defended him at the Jacobins club against Duport, who had accused him of aspiring to dictatorship. When he left the club, never to enter it again, his brow was damp with sweat. An attack of renal colic¹ on March 22 was the beginning of a decline which lasted eleven days. His witticism, upon hearing the sound of cannon in the Champ-de-Mars, is famous: "*Seraient-ce déjà les funérailles d'Achille?*"

Meanwhile the King's resolution to leave Paris was not as absolute as the preparations for it make it appear—at least, that is, until the so-called Saint-Cloud rising (in fact it occurred in the region of the Tuileries) of April 18, 1791.

Less spectacular than July 14, October 16, or the Federation of 1790, the events of the "*journée*", April 18, 1791, appear symptomatic and decisive. Was the rising worked up by the Court to draw attention to the King's captivity? Possibly, but in the King's eyes the matter was not a political one: was he or was he not to go to Saint-Cloud to make his confession and Easter duty under a non-juring priest? During the preceding days there had been violent assaults on certain convents. Egged on by the Jacobin news-sheets of Marat, Fréron and Camille Desmoulins, infuriated mobs had beaten and maltreated a number of nuns, and flogged some women who had attended a Mass celebrated by a non-juring priest. At the demand of the

¹ "*coliques néphrétiques*".

King and La Fayette, who was determined that freedom of worship should be respected, the directory of the *Département* decided that disused churches, or any other suitable private buildings, could be acquired for the purpose of holding services according to the Roman rite and conducted by non-juring priests. But the Press and the clubs were carrying on a campaign to compel the King to resort to a juror priest.

Louis consulted Mgr Bonnel, bishop of Clermont, who advised him that he must abstain from this course, "because of the scandal to which it would give rise". Contrary to the rumour the King did not go to Mass on Palm Sunday, but he set off with his family for Saint-Cloud on the following day. Whereupon Danton who, since Mirabeau's death, had aligned himself with the Orléanist faction, mobilized his followers and set his "barkers" proclaiming, "The King is emigrating: this is the first stage." A mob surrounded the carriages; the horses' reins were seized upon, and there were shouts of "The King shall not leave!"

This time, since his conscience was involved, the King tried to resist: "It would be surprising", he said, "if, having given liberty to the nation, I am not to be free myself." La Fayette mounted his horse and set off at a gallop to ask the Directory of the *Département* to decree martial law. At the Hôtel de Ville he found Danton intimidating the municipal directors with the thunder of his voice. The General threatened to resign, provoking Danton to a roar of, "Only a coward deserts his post in danger!"

At the Assembly, to which Gilbert, accompanied by Bailly, then betook himself, he could not get a hearing. He therefore galloped back to the Tuileries and threw his cavalry against the mob. But cavalry sabres were parried by bayonets: no longer undivided, the National Guard had ceased to give blind obedience to their chief. Moreover, Danton had arrived on the scene with his own battalion under the pretext of "flying to the rescue of public order"—Danton, who was to be formally accused by La Fayette of having long been in the pay of those who had provoked this rising.

The risk of causing a blood-spilling was the one motive which could cause Louis to yield: "It is not possible for me to leave

[the city]? Very well! I will stay." And, as they returned up the steps of the Tuileries, "At least", Marie-Antoinette said to the General, "you will now admit that we are not free." But she had been expecting it all; and Gilbert recorded in his *Mémoires* that the rising, planned by Mirabeau, was designed to provide the opponents of the Revolution with an argument against the idea that the King was acting independently. Gilbert seems to have known nothing of the activities of one Ephraim, a Jew in the pay of the Berlin Government, by them instructed to work up public opinion in Paris against Marie-Antoinette, in order to set France and Austria at loggerheads.¹ Some days after the disturbance Ephraim wrote to Laclos:

"I hear you are in despair at the failure of your last undertaking. I believe it, for it has cost us a great deal and in these times we cannot be too careful of money. Such, at least, are the intentions of Frederick-William, my master . . . I had counted on the King not immediately dismissing the priests of his chapel and that this would provide us with the means of raising an uproar against him.² Nothing of the kind, he dismisses them and we are still the dupes. The man is impregnable: from whatever side you attack him, he suddenly disarms you. Who would have reckoned with finding on the throne a man who sacrifices all his personal gratifications to the tranquillity of his people?

"... For some hours our position was brilliant, I even thought that your amiable patron³ was about to replace his cousin on the throne; but now my hopes have changed. . . . The only thing which gives me pleasure in all this is that we have, by this shock, ruined La Fayette, which is a great deal achieved. Our five hundred thousand *livres* have been spent more or less uselessly, that is what I find most unfortunate; we shall not have such sums at our disposal every day and the King of Prussia will grow weary of providing money. . . .

"We must arm ourselves with courage and wait for what the couriers we sent into all the *Départements* may have accomplished; if they have succeeded in provoking risings, riots, we shall have

¹ National Archives, F. 11, 45.

² "*faire crier après lui*".

³ "*patron*", "employer" might be nearer in this case. The *patron* was, of course, Philippe d'Orléans.—*Trans.*

an easy task.¹ If, on the other hand, they have accomplished nothing, I believe we shall have to give up the game. . . .

"P.S.—I learn that the Guard is not willing to let their General go. This blow has confounded me. . . . Hasten to summon the council and let me know immediately."

What a flood of light is cast by this document! The part played by the Orléanist party; foreign tampering with the revolutionary movements; the factitious character of those movements, especially in the provinces. Not to mention the King of Prussia's scurvy conduct and that, more excusable, of his agent! Nor is the letter any less interesting in the matter of La Fayette: it is clear that Ephraim still regarded the General as an obstacle in the way of his mission, which was to prevent any agreement between Louis XVI and the Assembly.

And what more magnificent praise of the King of France could there be than an enemy's despair in the face of "a man who sacrifices all personal gratifications for the tranquillity of his people"? The facts could hardly have been better expressed: but, then, the King's conduct was dictated by devoutness, supernatural considerations, obstacles alike to Ephraim's intrigues and La Fayette's honest, if opportunist, advice. The General was suggesting that Louis should frankly tell the Assembly that while he would officially maintain its decree concerning the oath of the clergy, he claimed for himself the common right to freedom of worship. Louis seemed touched by this consideration and asked to think it over for a day. The next evening the King informed La Fayette that his spiritual directors had told him that it would suffice for his soul's salvation if he refrained from doing his Easter duty in the Church of a juring priest. It was an admission of defeat; it was, likewise, a defeat for La Fayette, since he was thus shown as incapable of ensuring liberty. The General once again resigned his office.

There followed a peaceful invasion of his house. Battalions parading with their colours, groups, individuals from the clubs, all urged him to reconsider his decision. At a council meeting of the Commune on the 22nd he remained firm, giving the reasons he had already expounded: constitutional authorities disregarded; their orders treated with contempt; the public

¹ "*nous aurons beau jeu*".

armed forces opposed to the execution of the very laws it was their duty to protect: A voluntary admission of insubordination by a section of the city's army, a solemn protest from all sixty battalions, a unanimous oath taken to obey the law under pain of dismissal—all these were required to persuade the General not to give up his command.

His defeat, then, was, by these occurrences turned into a partial and comparative victory. Not so the King's: Louis' defeat remained irreparable and was to be pregnant with consequences. Outraged in his conscience, Louis considered himself morally freed from all obligations towards an Assembly which did not even respect the principles enunciated by itself. Thereafter his conduct was to be as follows: apparent submission to avoid disturbances; the declarations he might have to make to quieten dishonest opponents would, in his own eyes, be worthless. La Fayette was to believe in the sincerity of a resignation which was merely superficial and under cover of which Louis was planning his flight, even though it be treated as treason.

The Constituent Assembly was given over to party strife, powerless even to complete the voting of the clauses of that Statute which, two years before, it had undertaken to give the country. Friendly foreigners saw the situation more clearly than Frenchmen. The failure of the peaceful revolution was foreseen by Gouverneur Morris, by the *comte* de Mercy-Argenteau, and by the two Swedes, Fersen and Staël. Whereas, on the other hand, in the case of La Fayette, rigidity of principles had precisely the same consequences as the narrow-mindedness of lesser men—that is, a total incapacity to take actual events and men into account. Who was it said “politics are men”? For La Fayette politics were principles. Or rather a principle: liberty, as he, at least, understood it; but he could not see whither this liberty was engaged in leading the country—the imminent dictatorship of the Jacobins which he himself would be powerless to prevent.

In the eyes of Louis XVI the civil constitution of the clergy was, without any doubt, a schism denounced and condemned by the Pope. Consequently he could no longer fulfil his functions as the “Most Christian King”, crowned and anointed at

Reims. Should he, then, abdicate? A King of France did not abdicate, precisely because he was entrusted with a divine mission, that of reigning over a country which was "the Eldest Daughter of the Church" under the ancient motto *Gesta Dei per Francos*. Louis, in the reflections of his youth, had written on this subject, "Him and none other". His abdication would give his realm over to the very schism he was most afraid of and his own fault would be all the more serious. . . . And yet—to run away . . . ?

But then, in the first place, it would not be running away if he went to another town within French territory. His aim was not to emigrate, but to put himself under the protection of his army, which he believed to be loyal, and so restore his own power to continue reigning. Secondly, the Constitution was not completed, he had not accepted it. Morally, he was free. And although he might, to some extent, be counting on foreign support, it was only indirectly and as a means of pressure. He certainly hoped that he would have no need of it in the form of military action, and in any case had no thought of paying for such support by any cession of territory or any part of his sovereignty. On the contrary, he believed that he would be preserving France from foreign war and dismemberment: for it was not very likely that the absolute sovereigns of neighbouring countries would tolerate Jacobin revolution on their own doorstep; they would destroy it by force and, if he were no longer in the picture as King, would annex pieces of the country by way of war indemnity and for the future safety of their frontiers.

Moreover, Louis was convinced that while Paris might be Jacobin the provinces were still royalist. He was not going to leave France, but only Paris, where he was a prisoner of the Commune and the Assembly, and where his gaolers would soon, no doubt, be much more dangerous men than La Fayette and Bailly—Philippe, for example, and those who were making use of him: Louis knew too much history to have forgotten the Fronde.

Bad psychology? Maybe, in his situation, inevitable. Mistaken strategy, imprudence, clumsiness? Very possibly: but for him, from his point of view, there was no other way out. The unhappy monarch judged that it would be better to have dealings

with his brother-in-law of Austria than with his brother of Artois, who, having taken refuge in Turin with his father-in-law the King of Piedmont, talked loudly of nothing but violent repression and the re-establishment of the *ancien régime*. "The extravagance of Turin is at its height," Marie-Antoinette wrote to Mercy-Argenteau, "it is not sure that we are listened to."

Doubtless it would have been better to act otherwise. But what exactly were La Fayette's intentions, what part was he playing? D'Hézèques represents him as having favoured, even organized, the King's flight in order to have a pretext for arresting him and having his final fall proclaimed. But it might equally well have been in order to remove him out of the reach of the Jacobins, as dangerous as, if not more dangerous than, the aristocrats.

Bailly's declaration, made in prison three years later, is disturbing: Bailly asserted that, on the eve of the King's flight, he "had just taken, as a mere precaution, a medicine in the form of pills". He was in a dressing-gown and night-cap when La Fayette arrived and, said the ex-mayor of Paris, "greatly surprised me by informing me that the King and his family were at that moment about to leave Paris, that there was nothing whatever to worry about, that he was watching all their moves and would answer for everything. . . ." And then left the house.

"Not wishing to commit myself," Bailly's declaration continued, "I sent for the two municipal officers nearest to the *mairie* to get their advice. The conclusion was, to await the further information La Fayette had promised me, and in fact he returned a little more than two hours after leaving me to tell us that the King and his family had entered their carriages and had taken the road to Champagne. La Fayette made great efforts to get me to undertake to wait for the outcome of this intrigue, of which I was in complete ignorance and which proved to me that I had more than once been La Fayette's dupe."¹

What degree of authenticity ought to be attributed to this declaration of a man threatened by the guillotine, to which,

¹ "It is known that the King left the Tuileries château with his brother, that they took the same road, that *Monsieur* parted from his brother, that La Fayette favoured the flight of one and had the other arrested" (Durand de Maillane, *papiers saisis*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lb 46-507).

shortly afterwards, he walked with courage? It would explain La Fayette's attitude during this crisis well enough—the imperturbable calm of a man quite sure of himself, sure, too, that he could not be caught unprepared by events—possibly because he held himself in readiness to act in accordance with whatever happened. However that may be, he lingered while the King was retiring for the night and must have seen Louis go several times to look out of the window, like a sportsman bent on forecasting the next day's weather. Then he returned to his house in the *rue de Bourbon*.¹

Coming out of the Tuileries, his carriage passed close by Marie-Antoinette, disguised and concealed by the shadows, making her way on foot to the rendezvous in the Carrousel where the *fiacre* driven by Count Fersen was waiting for her, the count wearing a many-caped coat like a professional coachman. The Queen, who was carrying a switch, slashed at one of the wheels of Gilbert's carriage in childish bravado, despite her affright, from which she had not recovered when she rejoined her family.

It was not until seven the following morning, the hour of the King's official awakening, that his valet-de-chambre, drawing the curtains of the alcove, found the bed empty. It seems that La Fayette was still asleep when his friend d'André, the deputy for Aix, came to break the news which had been all over the town and rousing the mob for an hour. The General's toilet did not take long: his residence was already crowded with people in search of information and officers asking for orders.

He went out on foot, and accompanied by his aide-de-camp, Louis de Romeuf, to face the muttering and murmuring, very far from benevolent crowd, which greeted his appearance in the streets. Shouts of "Treason!" were beginning to be heard: The General appears to have remained perfectly calm.

At the corner of the *rue de Bac*, in a surge of people the reverse of friendly, he met Bailly, who was on his way to La Fayette's house; and at the same time, bound for the same destination, Alexandre de Beauharnais, president of the Assembly, arrived on the spot. The three men, forcing their way through the

¹ Now *rue de Lille*, at the corner of the *rue de Courty*.

crowds, reached the Carrousel by way of the Pont-Royal and the Marignét wicket.

The crowd was neither less dense nor calmer, but the prestige of the hero of Two Worlds was still sufficiently powerful to open a way for the three men, who were shortly joined, in the Court of Princes, by a number of officers who came rushing up to their General. Gouvion repeated, what he had been excitedly bawling to anyone who would listen, that he had never left his post and that it was impossible that the King could have gone. The Assembly was not due to meet until nine o'clock, and during those days of crisis every moment counted. Bailly had nothing to say. Beauharnais was anxious.

La Fayette: Do you consider that the arrest of the King and his family is necessary for the public safety?

Beauharnais: Certainly, but by what right can we arrest him? Where is the authority? Who will give the order?

La Fayette (peremptory and smiling): *Hé bien!* I take the responsibility. Now Romeuf—

On General Staff H.Q. notepaper the following was written at his dictation:

The enemies of the revolution are carrying off the King, the bearer is instructed to warn all good citizens: they are enjoined, in the name of the fatherland in danger, to remove him from their hands and to restore him to the bosom of the National Assembly. It is about to meet but, meanwhile, I take upon myself full responsibility for the present order.

Paris. June 21, 1791

A voice from the crowd: What about the Queen and the Dauphin?

With his own hand the General added: *This order extends to all the Royal Family.*

As soon as this had been copied and signed, La Fayette sent bearers of copies out on to all the roads leading to the frontiers. Bayon was sent towards Châlons. Romeuf, being in La Fayette's confidence, went the most likely way, towards Laon and Mons. There were numerous officious volunteer couriers, most of whom did not get far, especially as the barriers had been closed and it was no longer possible to leave Paris without an *ordre de mission*.

While the crowd, albeit peacefully enough, was invading the Tuileries, the General had sent for his horse and now rode, unescorted, to the Hôtel de Ville. He arrived at the *place de Grève* just in time to save the *duc d'Aumont*, who, having already been very roughly handled, was about to be thrown into the Seine because, as commanding officer of the 6th division of the National Guard which had been on duty at the Tuileries the previous evening, he was being held responsible for the King's escape. La Fayette dismounted and turned to face the crowd, whose reactions were mixed, since while some were growling, others wept. "My children," he said, "Louis XVI's civil list was twenty-five millions; today every Frenchman is better off by a *livre* a year".¹ He also said, "You call this fault a misfortune. What name would you give to a counter-revolution which would deprive you all of liberty?"

He was applauded. He then entered the Hôtel de Ville with Bailly, while the tocsin was sounding, the Pont-Neuf cannon firing three rounds as an alarm signal, and drums beat to quarters everywhere.

Those representatives who had arrived at the Assembly before the president were all at sea. A royalist deputy, the *comte de Bouthillier-Chavigny*, one of the first to arrive, recorded, in his *Mémoires* (unpublished), "The committees mustered, broke up again, gathered together again, deliberated, concluded nothing. The most lugubrious silence reigned in the Hall. Finally it was secretly agreed to send a deputation to the King, when his whereabouts were known, composed of members, from all three estates, who had remained loyal to him. The delegates were already nominated. . . ." ² Later Bouthillier noted: "When he [La Fayette] appeared on the tribune, he said nothing resolutely, but he finished by asserting that the King would be stopped³ and brought back to Paris. The spirit [of the session] changed immediately, they busied themselves with the insults with which

¹ "tous les Français héritent aujourd'hui une livre de rente."

² This decision, which seems to have been overlooked by historians, is worthy of note. The Constituent Assembly was ready, not to serve against the King, but to negotiate with him. La Fayette was to change the course of events.

³ Or "arrested".—*Trans.*

the King was to be assailed on his return. His armorial bearings were knocked down, his name effaced from all the places where anything which recalled his memory could be found."

Thus then, twice, on this 21st June, La Fayette forced the hand of fate. His was the will and his the order which were to stop Louis and bring him back to Paris, infinitely more a prisoner than he had been before he left it; for Regnault de Saint-Jeand'Angély's motion, in the same sense, did not come until later.

Beauharnais, who meanwhile had resumed the presidency of the Assembly, announced the event in a few dull words and stated that the General had already sent out couriers on to all the roads. Protests: "La Fayette is not a legal authority. Only the executive is qualified to do that." Unfortunately it was the executive which had just taken flight and vanished. . . .

Without having resolved this somewhat *vaudevillesque* problem, the Assembly voted to send off the couriers, thus legalizing La Fayette's initiative and adopting his fiction that the King had been carried off, and proposed "to stop any outcome by preventing the journey from continuing"¹—a succulent periphrase to avoid having to write "to arrest the King", although it came to exactly the same thing. Adopted.

Another bit of rigmorole: to send this order, the Ministers were required; they were not, and could not be there, for the rule forbade it. The Assembly therefore passed a decree admitting them to the bar of the House and declared themselves to be in permanent session. Cries of, "Let us act, gentlemen!" were raised. Meanwhile members were sweating freely, for the heat was intense; some went in search of fresh air and the attendants sprinkled vinegar on the central aisle. Suddenly Beauharnais announced that one of La Fayette's aides-de-camp was asking to be heard. It was Romeuf, and he described his adventure briefly: he had just left his General's house, accompanied by the young Curmer, and was about to cross the Pont-Louis XVI (later Pont de la Concorde), the building of which was not finished, when he was knocked from his horse by some workmen, roughly handled, and dragged to the Feuillants guardroom, while his acolyte disappeared in the struggle. The incident does not seem to have roused much interest in the Assembly; it

¹ "d'en arrêter les suites en empêchant que la route soit continuée."

demanded to hear the text of the Order sent out by La Fayette. Romeuf handed it over to Beauharnais, who read it aloud and proposed entrusting the aide-de-camp with a copy of the Assembly's decree. Approved. Romeuf might and did beg that something be done about the safety of his companion, who might well be in great need of help at that very moment, nobody would listen to him; but, as it was essential that he get away as quickly as possible and there must be no risk of his being stopped, two deputies, Latour-Maubourg, the General's friend, and Biauzat, were sent with him as far as the barriers.

Did they, as they left the Assembly, hear the wag who shouted, in the manner of a newsvendor, "Lost, one King and one Queen! A fair reward will be paid to whoever does *not* find them"? Romeuf's projected route was by Soissons and Laon, but as he was mounting his horse a young postillion, Pierre Lebas by name, whose business had taken him to Claye, driving a three-horse cabriolet, the previous evening,¹ announced that he had there seen a large, closed, six-horse *berline*, preceded by two mounted couriers. Now, Lebas' cabriolet had set off from the *rue* Millet (recently renamed *rue* Matignon), from an hotel with a *porte-cochère*, the first as one came in from the *faubourg* Saint-Honoré, and this was well known as Fersen's. This information caused Romeuf to change his itinerary and to take the road to Metz, in an attempt to overtake Bayon, which he did at Châlons at ten o'clock that night.

And it was Bayon, indeed, whom he was trying to catch, rather than the royal family. For Romeuf was a royalist and his one hope was that something would happen to check the pursuit. And he knew that his colleague, very much a "patriot", would do everything in his power to accomplish his mission.

Appearing before the municipality of Châlons, which was in permanent session, Romeuf produced his papers and asked to continue on his way at once. As the Assembly's commissioner he took precedence of his colleague, but Bayon, very angry at seeing himself relegated to second place, insisted that he must accompany him. They set off together in a cabriolet which, by way of Sainte-Menehould and Clermont-en-Argonne, deposited them at Varennes at dawn. The royal family had been at

¹ It carried Marie-Antoinette's two chambermaids.

Varennnes since the previous evening, kept out of sight at the house of the grocer, Sauce.¹

Throughout their journey the two aides had talked of nothing but Bouillé and his army. Great was their astonishment at finding no soldiers, but only National Guards and peasants alerted by the tocsin. Bayon was jubilant, Romeuf in despair. It was he who had to serve Louis with the Assembly's decree, sobbing as he did so. Marie-Antoinette, who knew him, exclaimed, "What, is it you, Monsieur de Romeuf; I should never have believed it. Oh! M. de La Fayette has only his American republic in mind; now he will see what a French republic is like!"

And, as the King had put the decree on the bed where Madame Royale and the Dauphin were sleeping, she knocked it on to the floor, saying, "I don't want it to soil my children."

What followed is well known. Bouillé, for whom they waited all night long, did not arrive, and despite every shift and pretext they were forced to set out on the return journey at seven-thirty in the morning. It was a long, intensely hot calvary of four days, becoming more and more painful as they drew nearer to Paris owing to the attitude of the population. Whereas in the provinces many people showed sympathy for the royal family, some even at the risk of their lives, the near neighbourhood of the capital, long subject to propaganda, greeted the travellers with threats and insults.

Those four days were not easy for La Fayette, despite his sang-froid and his air of being superior to whatever happened. At the house of his friend Latour-Maubourg, where the three deputies delegated by the Assembly to meet the King met, he joked and sneered.² But his appearance in the Assembly was

¹ The royal family's Odyssey, albeit so often told, still contains obscurities. André Castellet has revealed certain details concerning the part played by Léonard, the Queen's hairdresser, who, preceding the fugitives, was responsible, by his clumsiness, for the withdrawal of the military post at Varennnes, commanded by Bouillé's son. (*Léonard, Journal Intime*, S.F.E.L.T., 1950, pp. 307 *et seq.*) See also, by the same author, the account entitled *Ratantout* (the place where Bouillé stopped on the morning of June 21) in *Souverains en fuite* (Amiot-Dumont).

² *Relation du voyage de Pétion*, quoted by Lenôtre: *La Drame de Varennnes*, p. 223.

greeted by grumbling. "No uniforms here," Camus growled. Rewbell accused him of complicity. Barnave protested—"I swear that M. de La Fayette has deserved well of the fatherland."

M. de La Porte, *intendant* of the civil list, deposed a sealed envelope on the King's behalf. It contained a long exposition of his situation up to June 20 and the motives for his flight, followed by an appeal to the French people. The Assembly was impressed by the dignified and paternal style of this document, in spite of an occasional paltriness, as when he complained of not being allowed the commodities enjoyed by any Frenchman in easy circumstances. The principal military men then in Paris placed themselves at the King's disposal. On the following day those deputies who were military officers swore an oath of complete obedience to him. An inventory of the Treasury and the Repository (Garde-Meuble) showed both intact.

That evening, at the Jacobins, Robespierre delivered a kind of general indictment: nobody was spared—King, ministers, Assembly, Bailly, La Fayette, all were guilty. And, as if he were dealing with powerful and dangerous enemies, the member for Arras declared himself aware of the peril to which he was exposing himself in denouncing them, but nevertheless ready to sacrifice his life. To which Camille Desmoulins cried, "We will all die with you!" Thereafter a whole troop of representatives arrived at the club: two hundred moderates led by La Fayette and Alexandre de Lameth. Danton made a furious attack:

"*M. le Commandant général* swore by his head that the King should not leave; we demand the King's person or the General's head. . . . Either you are stupid, or you have betrayed our country. . . . I should wish to believe that we can reproach you only with mistakes. . . . Would you be truly great? Then become a citizen again."

Lameth—for the attack had the unexpected result of uniting yesterday's enemies—hit back. After him La Fayette, Sieyès and Barnave urged all to stick together. At the Assembly on the morrow, the 23rd, a party of National Guards volunteered to renew their oath. Beaten, Danton went to the Cordeliers to demand the deposition of the King, at that moment returning, as a prisoner, to his capital.

On the 24th the General and his staff waited for the King at Pantin. He had managed to silence the mob, but that was all he could do. The journey had been deliberately prolonged to take in the boulevards and give the people of Paris the satisfaction of so uncommon a spectacle. Then, for the last stage, there was an escort of infantry, entailing a walking pace, so that the stage from Meaux to Paris lasted ten and a half hours. And everywhere there were bills which read:

WHOEVER SALUTES THE KING WILL BE BEATEN
WHOEVER INSULTS THE KING WILL BE HANGED

La Fayette was said to have contrived this clever, two-faced order. Every man in the crowd remained covered, but there was not a shout, not a movement, excepting at the last moment when the *Gardes du Corps* seated, with tied hands (the kidnapping fiction had to be maintained), would have been massacred but for the intervention of Barnave and Mathieu Dumas.

La Fayette presented himself to the King with what he calls "compassion and respect"—that is, with the cold courtesy of ceremonial occasions.

"Sire," he said, "your Majesty is aware of my attachment to your Majesty, but I have not failed to make it clear that should your Majesty separate himself from the people's cause, I should be on the people's side."

"True," Louis replied, "you have followed your principles; it is a party matter. Well, now here I am. I tell you frankly that, until very recently, I believed I was in a vortex of people sharing your opinions and by whom you surrounded me, but that your opinions were not those of France. I recognize that I was wrong and that yours were, in fact, the general opinions."

Marie-Antoinette tried to give La Fayette the keys of certain caskets which were in the *berline*. He refused them, saying that nobody would dream of opening the caskets. Whereupon, with an angry gesture, she threw them at him. He caught them in his hat, which he was holding in his hand: "Your Majesty will be good enough to excuse me for putting you to the trouble of taking them back, for I will not touch them." "Oh!" the Queen replied, "I shall find others less susceptible than you."

The last word of that day was the King's—but there is some difference of opinion among the witnesses concerning the circumstances. Here is the most plausible account. Having written a number of letters, Louis had told his valet-de-chambre to show them to La Fayette before sending them off. The indignant General exclaimed, "They are trying to make me play the part of a spy!" And, going immediately to the King's study, he asked for his orders.

"It seems to me", Louis replied (laughing according to some accounts, without apparent irony according to others), "that I am more at your orders than you at mine!"

Chapter 15



LOUIS XVI AT THE ORDERS OF CINCINNATUS

MARIE-ANTOINETTE had left Paris on June 20 with all the look of youth still about her. Upon her return six days later she bore the marks of her ordeal; her hair had turned white. Between the tragic Queen and the scouted King, La Fayette's task, difficult enough before their flight, became even more so after it.

The closeness of the watch kept over the royal family during the weeks following their return from Varennes is notorious. There were National Guards permanently on duty in the royal apartments. The Queen could not even rise, or retire to bed, or dress herself out of their sight. It was only with the greatest difficulty that she obtained a concession: the guards were moved from the inside to the outside of her bedroom door; even so she could not prevent them from coming in from time to time to make sure she was in her bed. No visitors were allowed without express permission. People entering and leaving the château were searched, etc. La Fayette, possibly against his better feelings, countenanced these vexatious rules.

The credit side of his account was strengthened by the adherence of the triumvirate Barnave-Duport-Lameth, his adversaries of yesterday. Thus the Feuillants club was founded, a union of constitutional monarchists opposed to the Jacobins. As a result there was no longer to be a centre party between the champions of royalty (the partisans of absolutism being out of the running) and the "reds"—Danton, Robespierre and their friends. The chances of a peaceful evolution were therefore all the slenderer, and the Feuillants were soon to hear themselves called "Fayettists", "devoted" by Camille Desmoulins, to the guillotine and by Marat to the African torture of impalement. . . .

Passions were still further heightened by two manifestos, Bouillé's and that issued by the right wing of the Assembly.

Bouillé (playing Brunswick in advance) threatened Paris and the deputies: "For the King's life and the lives of his family you shall answer to all the kings; if one hair of their heads be touched, not a stone of Paris will be left standing. I know the roads, by them I shall guide the foreigners' armies, and upon your own heads be it, for they will be forfeit."

In the Constituent Assembly the right-wing members, to the number of two hundred and ninety, decided to take no part in the proceedings so long as the Assembly was not acting in the King's name. Thus, from outside, and from within, oil was being thrown upon the flames.

July 10: Voltaire's posthumous triumph. His coffin was transferred to the Panthéon on a cart drawn by white horses borrowed from the Queen's stables. Among the crowd a woman bore aloft a pike to which an inscription had been affixed, *The people's final argument*—by way of being a *tu quoque* to the motto engraved on Louis' cannon—*ultima ratio regum*. Between this revolutionary inscription, and the guns of the Emperor and the Prussian King, La Fayette alone remained.

Grégoire, Pétion, Buzot and Vadier were calling for a High Court (of Justice), a convention to try the King. Meanwhile at the proposal of Barnave, converted to royalism since, as one of the Assembly's commissioners, he had accompanied the sovereigns on the return from Varennes, the deputies voted to retain Louis XVI, described by La Fayette as "the best prince of his family despite his recent faults, and by and large the best in Europe". Nevertheless, the exercise of his powers was to be suspended until the work of constitution-making was done.

As a counter-move the Jacobins launched a petition drawn up by Laclos and Brissot calling for the deposition (*déchéance*) of the King, but also his replacement by constitutional methods: it was a manoeuvre in Philippe's favour and served to provoke hostile cries from the extremists—"No more tyrants! Down with the traitors!" What they wanted, these second-wave revolutionaries—Hébert, Coffinhal, Momoro, Hanriot—was a republic, and their own manifesto of July 16 summoned the people to come to the Champ-de-Mars on the following day to sign a petition

demanding that the King be tried and a new executive appointed. La Fayette, not very prudently, announced that he would maintain order, and forbade processions. Bailly was even inclined to declare martial law.

On Sunday the 17th the slow file past of the signatories to the petition had already started when, beneath the altar of *la Patrie*, a noise was heard. Two war-wounded men were extracted from it. What were they doing there? A cry went up that they were counter-revolutionaries preparing some villainy. Vainly did the two wretches swear that nothing but curiosity had brought them there; they were lynched and their heads, according to the now established rite, stuck on pikes. La Fayette brought up a battalion of National Guards, to be greeted by boos, stones and a few shots. The General saw one of the guns pointed at him, but it flashed in the pan. His guards seized the man, the General let him go, and his gesture of generosity was interpreted by his enemies with malevolence: he was accused of having the man in his pay as an *agent provocateur*.

Charles de Lameth was presiding over the trembling Assembly. He summoned Bailly to restore order. That astronomer, acting with decision for once, had the red flag, symbol of martial law, hoisted above the Hôtel de Ville, and marched on the Champ-de-Mars with the National Guard. La Fayette was at the head of the Guard's professional corps. He found the esplanade crowded with more or less inoffensive idlers; the active revolutionary elements were out on the periphery, on the sloping bank, armed with stones with which they bombarded the armed force. The militia replied with a salvo fired *in the air*, which does *not* go to prove that they had lost their heads. But in the moment of silence which followed, while muskets were being reloaded, there was a single shot fired, towards La Fayette but without hitting him. This time the return fire was as murderous as it was spontaneous, and, as the artillery were getting ready to open fire also, the General flung himself across the mouth of a cannon. Fifty dead and many more wounded. At the time the real figures were grossly exaggerated: there were tales of ten, twelve thousand, a physical impossibility, but that was not the point; blood had been spilled, henceforth the "reds" would be irreconcilable and the Constitutionals lumped in

with the *émigrés*. Mirabeau's prophecy was vindicated and fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the moderates were, for the time being, the victors. They tried to exploit their victory by suspending the revolutionary papers, Marat's *Ami du Peuple*, Fréron's *Orateur du Peuple* and Camille Desmoulin's *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*. There was a short-lived panic among the future terrorists who either went to ground or fled. Danton went as far as England. They expected worse to come. But, like Louis, La Fayette had a horror of blood-letting: on the 17th his troops had been too quick for him, firing without his orders.

His Feuillants friends, however, made a new effort: revision of the Constitution. The King was to appoint the military leaders and certain other officials: the civil status of the clergy would no longer be ensured by fundamental law, but by common law, therefore subject to modification by ordinary deliberation in the Assembly. The franchise qualification was raised¹ and the right of petition suspended. It was a kind of foretaste of the regime of 1830, an ephemeral victory for the middle-class. But, at the same time, the Constituent Assembly having, by a self-denying ordinance, decided that none of its members might sit in the new Assembly, this, as it were, reactionary legislation was deprived of any chance of stability.

July 17–October 8: eighty-four days. La Fayette's part in active politics was drawing to an end. While Marie-Antoinette was trying to negotiate with Barnave and the Lameths, and was actively negotiating with Vienna, but without much success, the Commander of the National Guard maintained his watch, which the royalists considered intolerable, although it was outwardly respectful. Subsequently he was to justify himself in that document, a kind of personal apologia, entitled *Lettre à d'Hennings*, somewhat in the manner of the preambles used by the tribunals:

"It had been decreed that until the completion of the Constitution Act, Louis XVI and his family were to be detained in the Tuileries; that the principle of all sovereignty resides indefeasibly in the nation; that no individual can have authority

¹ i.e., the franchise contracted, of course.—*Trans.*

which does not derive expressly from it; that Louis XVI had abjured his legal title: to treat him officially as King was, therefore, under the accepted doctrine, out of the question."

Gilbert was able to arrange that the domestic service of the royal apartments was carried out by the usual servants and that it suffered no changes. But he was obliged to admit that between those apartments and the rooms of the customary guards were placed "special guards picked out by the commanding general, guards whom the Assembly had made, under his orders, personally responsible". He was also forced to admit that his officers, worthy men, "sometimes made themselves troublesome, but only when popular anxiety, and consequently the safety and tranquillity of the royal family, seemed to them to require the sacrifice of their delicacy"—by which circumlocutions he meant that they did their duty against their better feelings and to protect the royal family. He adds that, throughout this period, all measures taken by the Assembly, the properly constituted authorities and the armed forces tended towards the King's restoration—which is at least partially true. Nevertheless, Louis was still a prisoner unless and until he accepted the Constitution.

In the course of this, so to speak, interregnum, the General received a letter from Washington, written on July 28, before Louis' attempted escape was known in the United States. This letter was a reply to one which La Fayette had written to his great friend during the previous summer and which had ended as follows:

"The people begin to grow weary of the Revolution and the Assembly. This disposition can be attributed on the one hand to the French character and innumerable personal losses, on the other to certain faults in the Assembly, the intrigues and ambitions of some of its leaders; but we still have enough wind to bring the ship to harbour."

To these two ideas, which were to some extent contradictory, Washington in his reply, after having "deplored the disorders and uncertainty of the *nation amie*", and touched on the part played by Providence "who can, by His will, bring order out of chaos", the President added, "The turbulent population of great cities is always to be feared; its violence destroys all public authority for a time and the consequences are sometimes far-

reaching and terrible. It is to be supposed that in Paris especially such tumults are disastrous, now . . . that there is so great a number of ill-intentioned and intriguing persons determined . . . to destroy the public peace to gain what they want. . . ."

Thus, then, Gilbert was, until the end, receiving advice from a great chief of state. But in order to make use of it La Fayette would have had to be not an imitation Washington, but Washington in person.

Events abroad were about to make the General's task more arduous than ever. The Emperor Leopold II, who had succeeded his brother Joseph II the year before, was being asked for help by the Constitutionalists, urged to help, but in a contrary sense, by his sister, and, again, by the *émigrés*. There was a question as to who should take the lead in intervening: the princes, Louis' brothers, with Condé and the *émigrés*, or the Emperor himself, as Marie-Antoinette desired. And what shape should the intervention have? When should it be made? Leopold entrenched himself behind the idea of a general concert of monarchs, which seemed rather improbable. He was to give his reservations official expression in the *Declaration of Pilnitz*, in agreement with the King of Prussia.

Nobody who knew how to read could have found the text of that document very threatening. Any military action was conditional upon agreement not only between the two major sovereigns but all the German princes, who were very numerous and whose interests were frequently divergent. This did not at all suit the *comte d'Artois*' book; he and his friends issued a very incendiary counterblast in the form of a commentary on the excessively prudent Declaration. This was the *Coblentz Manifesto* which, according to Rivarol "was enough to rally all hearts and all minds to the legislature".¹ It was, virtually, a death sentence on the King, since it must give him up to patriot revenge.

"*Cains!*" said the Queen, when she read the Manifesto.

The increasingly amorphous Assembly remained mute. Its career, which had begun in hope, and carried it through storms, was ending with a whimper.

Louis had demanded ten days for reflection before accepting

¹ i.e., the Assembly.—*Trans.*

the Constitution. On September 13 he did, with deliberate reservations, make that gesture of assent which had been represented to him as the only means of procuring a relaxation of tension. The Queen, who had consulted Barnave, influenced this decision but was not, even so, any the less determined to count on help from her brother.

Did La Fayette really take the King's capitulation seriously? The terms in which it was expressed seemed to him, by his own account, sincere. But since Louis was no longer to command, whom was he to obey? The Assembly? Or the promptings of his Divine Mission, in which he still believed? In his eyes the oath he had taken on the day of his coronation and consecration remained superior to that which had just, in some degree, been forced on him. Certainly La Fayette never really understood that royal conscience which, in appearance at least, drove the King to forswear himself.

And Gilbert was thinking chiefly of himself, of the figure he would cut in history. There can be no doubt that he must, on September 17, have breathed an enormous sigh of relief. He would be able to write to Washington, or at least give him to understand, "As you founded the American republic, so I have given France a Constitution. My mission is accomplished." (It is almost like reading St Paul in the Epistle to Timothy—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.")

Louis' attitude was in striking contrast with the General's satisfied pride and impenitent optimism. On the day when the King accepted the Constitution, he found ready for him, in the Assembly, a chair similar to the president's and placed at the same level. While, erect and with bare head, he was taking the oath of loyalty to the nation and the Constitution, he suddenly perceived that the deputies had seated themselves to listen. He at once sat down himself, before completing the ceremony. The Queen watched this curious spectacle from a box. After the session her husband, in tears, said to her, "All is lost. You were witness to my humiliation! That you should have come to France to see that!"

Then it was Gilbert's turn to be stricken: the rank of Commander of the Paris National Guard was abolished; the office

was to be occupied in turn by six legion commanders, each for one month. The retirement of Cincinnatus was not after all to be voluntary, but obligatory. As Octave Aubry put it, "the Assembly's Parthian arrow for La Fayette."

And while, once again, Paris was decked with lanterns and bunting, on the far bank of the Rhine the *émigrés* were telling each other that Louis had dishonoured his royalty for the sake of peace and quiet.

It seemed that *Blondinet's* constitutional monarchy, undermined at home and threatened from abroad, was a statue with feet of clay.

As soon as the Constituent Assembly had ceased to be, the Commander of the National Guard had resigned his authority to the municipality of Paris. On October 8 he took leave of his militiamen. "Now the days of the Revolution make way for those of a regular organization, and of the liberty and prosperity which it guarantees. No power whatsoever, thanks to the strength represented by the National Guard, would be able to deprive the French people of liberty provided domestic disturbances can be avoided." (Truly a necessary corrective!) "*In order that a nation shall be free, it is enough to will it!*" But he should have added, *And that its neighbours will it too.* But he was, for the time being, satisfied to call for "*religious respect for and execution of the law*".

And, to round off, one more oath—they are past counting—*Liberty or death!*—the formula which the deputies had engraved on the buttons of their coats.

With him he took, say some, the Bastille locks; others, a golden-hilted sword whose blade was beaten out of the iron of those locks, which comes to much the same thing (the keys had already been sent as a gift to Washington). He took a medal specially struck for him and the statue of his great friend, by Houdon. And if he really believed that this little house-moving truly was the end of the Revolution, then he deserved indeed what Danton had said to him at the time of the King's flight to Varennes.

True, if that was his illusion, the people of Auvergne did all in their power to confirm him in it. His journey towards Chava-

niac was interminable, for at every town he had to stop and receive the homage of the municipality. In his own province the cheers with which, as far as he was concerned, the Parisians had lately grown miserly were restored to him. But, then, new ideas travelled but slowly across open country, from town to valley town. It took longer to unmake, as indeed to make, a reputation than it did in Paris. And since voluntary messengers went officiously before him, announcing his coming, there was time to prepare illuminations, flags, triumphal arches, and to compose speeches as flowery as the tables of a banquet. Quite literally did he travel among laurels, for his carriage became full of victor's crowns. The very calendar conspired to praise him, for the day of his arrival at Chavaniac was the tenth anniversary of Cornwallis' surrender. Not a discord in the whole concert.

Nevertheless he was again, in his own parish, to come up against that crucial question which had provoked the King's flight, the religious question. The day following his return home he wrote to an anonymous friend: "All would be going on very well here if it were not for episcopal and aristocratic manoeuvres designed to disgust the people with the Revolution under the pretext that it is sending them to hell." It is regrettable thus to find him echoing Voltaire's sarcasms. His excuse must be that he did not feel the gravity of the problem, which is proved by the rest of his letter: "All which loves [*sic*] the Constitution mix Liberty and religious ideas. All the *curés* have been replaced by juror priests, and I find in the non-conforming *curés*, most of them a very good sort of people, traces of the poison sent to them from Paris. Two of them are destined to live in a house of mine which I am maintaining as a chapel with the motto *Peace and Liberty*. The *ex-curé* of Chavaniac stays in my house. The peasants, rid of their shackles, paying half what they formerly paid, hardly dare rejoice in their liberty for fear of being condemned."

When the peasants of La Vendée and Brittany rose in defence of their religion, would he understand at last? Hardly. "As for me," he wrote, "I rejoice as a lover in the liberty and equality of this total change which has put every citizen on an equal footing, respecting none but the legal authorities. I cannot tell you with what delight I bow the knee before a village mayor. One needs to be something of an enthusiast to enjoy it all as I

do." (*An enthusiast*¹—and a little mad, thus Bouillé . . . and something of a simpleton, thus Napoleon.) "Those who think I have come here for a revolution are great idiots. I have as much pleasure and, perhaps vanity [*Not, surely, "perhaps". Here is the very bottom of his soul*] in absolute rest as I have had, these fifteen years, in action which, always directed to the same end and crowned by success, leaves me no part to play but a husband-man's. . . ."

For all that a man be La Fayette, he cannot arrange his destiny to suit himself. Cincinnatus' retirement was to be but a brief interlude; his plough had not completed its first furrow when he had to abandon it. War had broken out.

Louis XVI hated war. Nevertheless, he declared it, hoping that it would be neither long nor bloody, and that he might play the part of mediator between the three belligerents: the French, the foreigners, and the princes his brothers, with their gang of *émigrés* which the Elector refused to disperse.

The *comte* de Narbonne, Minister for War, had affirmed that "*la Patrie* designates as its chiefs Rochambeau, Luckner and La Fayette". In the matter of the third-named he had, to give his words more weight, told Louis, "If your Majesty does not appoint him today, the will of the nation will force you to do so tomorrow."

Farewell, Chavaniac's woods and valleys! Gilbert was back in Paris, in the presence of the King, who received his ex-gaoler with his customary good-nature; next at the bar of an Assembly composed of stranger faces, since no member of the Constituent might be re-elected. And immediately politics reared up before him, a serpent whose tail only he had crushed. As he went to take leave of the King before going to his Staff headquarters, he was accused by the courtiers of "baiting the King", by the Jacobins of "playing the courtier".

Almost alone, Robespierre had done everything in his power to prevent the war, but not because he was afraid of blood or of defeat. What he feared was victory, a victory gained by the generals of the royal army who, thereafter, would restore power

¹ In France, as in England, a pejorative in eighteenth-century sophisticated circles.—*Trans.*

to Louis. La Fayette's friends were, needless to say, pro-war, like the Girondins.¹

In particular Robespierre was denouncing "M. le *marquis de La Fayette*, Commander-in-Chief of the principal army in the field", whose rôle during the past three years he reviewed. . . . "But obedience to the generals of the executive authority is required, and letting ourselves be guided by the Minister (for War); that is why I want nothing to do with this war, and that is why I should wish to unite all our energy against our domestic enemies."

Meanwhile, since the General was no longer in command of the Paris National Guard, Bailly found himself, as it were, left high and dry: he resigned. Pétion was elected in his place, against Gilbert, who had put himself forward as a candidate. Marie-Antoinette made her friends vote for his opponent, so little confidence did she have in the man who seemed always to have been near her at the darkest times, at once her gaoler and her protector. She also took hostile action against Narbonne, whom she knew to be backed by La Fayette, Rochambeau and Luckner. Louis dismissed his War Minister. The Feuillant Cabinet gave way to the Girondins. The most prominent man of the new Administration was Dumouriez, who was determined to bring the situation to a head.

When Robespierre forecast a military dictatorship as the outcome of victory, he was showing more foresight into the middle future, guessing, as it were, at a Bonaparte as yet unknown, than into the immediate future, for he was overestimating La Fayette's power. "The most dangerous enemy of the liberty of peoples, and especially of our own," he said, "is military despotism, and this you have restored into the hands of our patricians, and the most ambitious of them. Are you

¹ There was an attempt at coming to agreement between the two groups, in the *salon* of Mme de Staël, M. de Narbonne's mistress. La Fayette took part in the meetings, with Talleyrand, Clavière, Condorcet, Brissot, Isnard. "This meeting", says Pellenc (*Correspondence avec Mercy-Argenteau 1791-1792*), "had recognized that it was necessary to try to give rise to circumstances which would drive the emperor into war." To which Georges Michon (*Robespierre et la guerre révolutionnaire 1791-1792*. Paris, 1937) adds, "The Fayetteist press and that of the right-wing did not conceal their bellicose opinions."

ignorant of the fact that the fate of revolutions is settled by those who control the armed forces?" And, a little later, "We are marching with giant strides towards military government."

It was the usual paradox of revolutionary situations: the friend of George Washington seemed to have become the principal obstacle to "the triumph of the people". And indeed he was about to try to save, *in extremis*, that constitutional monarchy of which he had been one of the first, as he had been one of the most ardent, promoters since 1789.

Chapter 16



LA FAYETTE TO THE MONARCHY'S RESCUE

THE grievances of both monarchy and nation were reaching a point of crisis. On the one hand, royalty as a system of government was increasingly threatened in its principle of authority. On the other, a new idol was erected, the Nation, a noble word in so far as it stood for the union and interests of all Frenchmen, but which was henceforth to be exploited by raging political factions.

Meanwhile, however, a contract between King and Nation was in being: the Constitution. On September 14 Louis had taken a solemn oath before the Assembly: "I swear to be faithful to the nation and to the law, to use all the power delegated to me in maintaining the Constitution as decreed." The principle of absolute monarchy was, then, over and done with; yet perhaps that which was known as the *good pleasure* of a monarch by divine right was less dangerous for the rights of man and citizen than the totalitarianism of popular power without checks or balances. The crisis would become acute through the tendency, inevitable product of the new principles, for all activity, including even thought itself, to be subordinated to the nation, that is to the State. The civil constitution of the clergy was an outcome of precisely that regimentation of individual consciences. The nationalization of religion was going to entail a resort to force, in order to establish it in a uniform manner throughout France. Such was the goal of the decree of May 27, 1792.

The first checks suffered by the armies in Belgium had increased political agitation, and the Jacobins were trying to rouse the people against the Girondins' Administration. The Assembly, endeavouring to bolster up its authority by violent

measures, declared itself in permanent session and decreed that a denunciation made by twenty citizens was all that was required to enable the directories of *Départements* to deport refractory (non-juring) priests.

On May 29 another decree disbanded the King's constitutional guard, which had been raised from one thousand eight hundred to six thousand men. Its commanding officer, the *duc* de Brissac, was to be tried before the High Court of Orléans, and a new and smaller guard to replace the old one.

Finally, on June 8 a third decree set up, as from July 14, a camp of twenty thousand *fédérés* near Paris, on the pretext of protecting the capital. These three decrees, all within a few days, were expressions of the henceforth open warfare against throne and altar. Louis accepted the arrangements concerning his guard, that is his personal safety, but refused to sanction the deportation of priests, or the muster of revolutionaries at the gates of Paris—"an army of twenty thousand brigands to govern Paris", as the Queen called them.

Dumouriez saw danger ahead, but disagreement had split his ministry: Servan, author of the June 8 decree, had not consulted his colleagues in the cabinet. On the 10th Roland, in an insolent letter to the King, emphasized the meaning of the measures. "The time for drawing back is past; there can no longer even be any question of temporizing. . . . Any more delay and the saddened people will believe that they behold in their King the friend and accomplice of the conspirators."

That was too much. Louis dismissed Roland, Servan and Clavière. In vain did Dumouriez urge him to sign the decrees; faced with Louis' refusal, he resigned. The only possible alternative government was a Feuillant ministry. It was formed by three men devoted to the King and attached to the Constitution—Lajard, Chambonas and Terrier-Monciel, who, little known and already unpopular, had neither the prestige nor the authority to dominate the opposition. The hour of one of the first personalities of the Revolution seemed to have come. The eyes of all men who hoped to check it yet in its career towards the fatal course it seemed about to take, turned to La Fayette. On June 16 the defender of threatened liberties addressed a letter to the Assembly from his camp at Maubeuge which was

to produce the effect of a clap of thunder in the already overcharged atmosphere. This intervention was all the more courageous in that the Assembly had circulated Roland's letter to the eighty-three *Départements* and expressed its regret at the dismissal of the three ministers.

The solemn warning issued by the General to the deputies was not as concise as one might perhaps expect from an army commander. Nevertheless it was clear and energetic: "*The chose publique* is in danger: the fate of France rests chiefly on her representatives. The nation expects its salvation from them: but, in giving itself a Constitution, it has laid down the unique way whereby they can save the nation. . . . Can you conceal from yourselves that a faction, and, to avoid vague denominations, the Jacobite¹ faction, has caused all the disorders?"

He pronounced himself against the decrees by the implications of his analysis: that which set up a camp of *fédérés* was a threat to the National Guard; that which established the deportation of priests was contrary to religious freedom. And finally the General was loyal to his King, in whom he saw one of the elements necessary to that liberty whose champion, before all else, he remained.

On the same day he sent Louis a copy of his letter: "The King knows my devotion to his constitutional authority and my attachment to his person. . . . Persist, Sire, strong in the authority which the will of the nation has delegated to you, in your generous resolve to defend constitutional principles against all their enemies. In that resolve will be found glory and salvation for the fatherland and for yourself."

It is notable, from a sentence in the body of the letter, that La Fayette did not say exactly in what quality he was taking this action. "To give expression to my thoughts was always a right, and on this occasion becomes a duty—the duty of a citizen, duty of a free man." Did this mean that an opinion, whoever happened to propound it, should be enough to give new tone to the failing will of the King, who, according to Mme Campan, was, in that month of June, obviously in a state of physical prostration?

¹ Jacobite for Jacobin, an allusion to the conspiracies of Stuart partisans, but it was impossible to mistake his meaning.

The King having vetoed the decrees despite Dumouriez's advice and the latter having resigned, the tragic event occurred. It is difficult to estimate to what extent La Fayette's letter contributed to this. Someone has called his initiative on this occasion "courageous clumsiness". Even so it bears witness to far-sightedness: respect for the Constitution might have prevented the triumph of a rebel faction. It was as if, borrowing in advance from Rouget de Lisle's song (already composed but still unknown), the defender of liberty, foreseeing the domestic troubles of the kingdom, had cried,

*Contre nous de la tyrannie
L'étendard sanglant est levé!*¹

On June 20 the popular flood burst out of the *faubourg* Saint-Antoine to present the Assembly and the King with a petition "relative to the circumstances". The unprecedented scenes which followed—the invasion of the Tuileries, the royal family threatened, Louis capped with a red bonnet, his calm courage, the heroism of Madame Elisabeth, are all history. More to our point in the life of La Fayette, at that time with his army, is the exact meaning of the demonstration as expressed in the factionists' slogans. Their gangs were led by persons hitherto obscure, such as the butcher Legendre or fanatics like the *marquis* de Saint-Huruge, and their cries were "Down with the veto!", and "Up with the Camp above Paris!" In Lamartine's *Histoire des Girondins* we are told how a fair young man elegantly dressed shouted at the King, "Sire, I summon you in the name of the hundred thousand men about me to sanction the decree against the priests. That, or death!" The King's resistance, his simple answer, are common knowledge: "I shall see what the Constitution orders me to do"—thereupon taking the hand of the municipal officer who stood beside him, and pressing it to his heart that he might feel how "it beat no quicker than usual". The demonstrators, surprised by the King's sang froid and good nature, and somewhat calmed by Pétion's tardy intervention, filed past the sovereigns they had just insulted and then left the palace.

¹ "Against us tyranny's
Bloody standard is raised."

There followed a reaction against the scenes of violence which had marked that day. An Address sent to the King by the city of Paris, to protest against the *coup de force*, carried more than twenty thousand signatures. Seventy-six directories of *Départements* expressed their indignation. That of the Seine gave orders for the instigators of the riot to be hunted down and prosecuted, and suspended Pétion, whose behaviour had been extremely suspicious.

A considerable proportion of the National Guard was equally outraged. On June 25 Louis reviewed the Guard: he was cheered and begged to wear their uniform. It seems he was prevented from doing so by constitutional scruples, and it is permissible to regret it. Easy-going, he did not imitate his predecessors who were leaders of armies, even to the indolent Louis XV who, in appearance at least, was the victor of Fontenoy.¹ Who knows but that his grandson by attaching the affection of his troops might have altered the course of the Revolution?

Was the situation changing in favour of the Feuillants? There were able men in the ministry—Terrier-Monciel, Minister for the Interior, for example. But, confronted by the Girondins, anxious to take their revenge, and by the Jacobins, Robespierre, Marat, Danton, whose influence was waxing, what chance had the moderates? Only one man might yet, despite insults and accusations hurled against him, have been able to offer a rallying point for the more reasonable men. La Fayette considered that that was his duty. Having made the necessary arrangements for the safety of his army, which had just won a minor victory, and counting on its backing, its merely moral support that is, he hastened to Paris, arriving at his friend La Rochefoucauld's on the evening of August 27. In vain had Luckner warned him, by the mouth of an aide-de-camp, on no account to go to Paris or the sans-culottes would cut his throat. Gilbert had replied in writing that "timid feelings were inadmissible in the midst of his brave army". And it was Luckner, as it happened, who was to perish on the scaffold.

For this was not a matter of fighting for disputed territory, but of defending an ideology. As soon as they learned of La

¹ The real victor was, of course, his General Maurice de Saxe, but Louis XV was present on the field.—*Trans.*

Fayette's letter the Jacobins, very disturbed, set on foot the rumour that it was not written by him. But the General's first words before the Assembly were an acknowledgment of authorship, and a claim that his troops fully shared his opinions: "The violent acts committed at the Tuileries have roused the indignation of all good citizens and particularly of the army." He stopped the Addresses expressing patriotic hatred against factionists of all parties, but he placed them on the *bureau* of the Assembly. He said, "Gentlemen, it is as a citizen that I have the honour of speaking to you. . . . The time has come to disappoint the hopes of those bad citizens who look only to the foreigners for the restoration of what they call public tranquillity, which, for free men, would be nothing but a shameful and intolerable slavery." To which end the General, "having thus rejected any feeling of *entente* with the enemy while at the same time avoiding intimidation", begged the National Assembly:

1. To order that the instigators and ringleaders of the violent acts committed at the Tuileries on June 20 be sought out and punished as criminally guilty of *lèse-nation*.
2. To destroy a sect which was invading national sovereignty, tyrannizing over the citizens, and whose public debates left no doubt about the atrociousness of its leaders.
3. "Finally, I dare to beg you, in my own name and that of every decent man in the kingdom, to take effective steps to enforce respect for all the properly constituted authorities, particularly your own and the King's, and to give the army an assurance that the Constitution will come to no harm at home while good Frenchmen are pouring out their blood to defend our frontiers."

The orator then took his seat on the petitioner's bench and Guadet, nicknamed "the Danton of the Gironde", replied. La Fayette, in his *Mémoires*, describes this reply as "an artificial and embarrassed attack". In moderate terms Guadet was anxious to know whether the army commander had obtained regular leave of absence, asserting that, if not, he would ask that the Minister for War be interrogated on this point and that a report be drawn up on the danger of allowing generals the right of petition. This motion was defeated by 339 votes to 234, after

Ramond, the Feuillant president of the Assembly, had intervened with a speech in praise of the General, "the oldest son of Liberty", and asked that his petition be referred for study to the Commission of Twelve. This measure was adopted. The president had concluded: "The National Assembly has sworn to maintain the Constitution. Faithful to its oath, it will know how to guarantee it against any attack." And, turning towards La Fayette: "The Assembly accords you the honours of the session." But the General did not wait for any more. He went immediately to see the King.

At the Tuileries he found the royal family reunited. Gilbert's *Mémoires* give scant details of this meeting. He says he received "vain thanks" and that the King and Queen repeated that they knew their only hope lay in the Constitution. It may be concluded that his welcome was polite but that nothing definite was discussed or concluded. The wisest words spoken were those of the youngest woman present.¹

Madame Elisabeth (if La Fayette is to be believed) was particularly touched and declared that "they should forget the past and throw themselves into the arms of the only man who could save the King and his family". La Fayette attributed his repulse to Marie-Antoinette, and it is a fact that the Queen considered that "it was better to perish than to be saved by La Fayette and the Constitutionals". Sister, as she was, of an absolute monarch, brought up in a Court where the King's will was law, she considered it out of the question for the monarchy to receive a new lease of strength from the very hands which had undermined its authority. Less intransigent, Louis nevertheless had more tangible and immediate reasons for hesitating. Possibly he may have known that the army on the frontiers,

¹ Respect for the Constitution was wanting in dynamism as a means of salvation for sovereigns deprived, by that same Constitution, of the greater part of their authority. On the other hand, it should be noted that the Revolution was acted out by very young actors. In 1792 Louis XVI was 38, Marie-Antoinette 37, Madame Elisabeth 28, La Fayette 35. These would be inclined to believe that their difficulties would tend to settle themselves. Their opponents were no older. Robespierre and Guadet were 34, Pétion 36, Brissot 38, Danton 33. Not a Nestor among them all, and only La Fayette lived beyond 40.

shot through with indiscipline, was not as reliable as its Commander-in-Chief claimed. Had not General Dillon been murdered, as recently as April 29, by his own men thrown into a panic and crying treason?

There remained the National Guard, in Paris. As we have explained, since La Fayette had been deprived of his command, the National Guard was commanded, in turn, by the battalion commanders, who had neither his prestige nor his authority. Most of the guards were still devoted to their old General. On June 29 there was to be an important review of those elements of the guard most favourable to the Constitutionals. La Fayette resolved to take the salute himself and asked the King's permission to accompany him. It was his intention, as soon as the King withdrew, to harangue the troops and, as he says in his *Mémoires*, "to do whatever should be necessary in the service of the Constitution and of public order".

This has been taken to mean that he had a plan for some immediate action, such as closing the Jacobins' club, but it is more likely that Lacretelle, the friend of La Rochefoucauld, was right in his opinion that there was no such important project. Mme Campan claimed that, on the day La Fayette arrived, those officers of the Guard who were royalists had asked the King whether they were to model their behaviour on the General's, while he was in Paris, and that Louis had replied, "No."¹ He seems to have been influenced chiefly by his fear lest rigorous measures be taken against his family in the event of failure.

The Queen distrusted La Fayette, but it is possible that she had another motive for her opposition to the project. Lamartine in his *Histoire des Girondins* says that "gold of the civil list flowed freely in the *faubourgs*". Lacretelle in his *Histoire de la Législative* reports that "Danton and Fabre d'Eglantine, at the price of certain sums wrung from the Court, promised to make the Girondins repent of an insurrection which they represented as the work of that party only and to ruin their popularity". There is, then, no cause for surprise in the fact that Marie-Antoinette had Danton warned of La Fayette's project. At all events the review was cancelled by Pétion, on whom the Queen still believed she could rely, an hour before it was due to begin.

¹ Mme Campan, Vol. II, p. 221.

On the way back to his hôtel from the Tuileries, with his aides-de-camp, La Fayette was followed by three or four hundred national guards and a few small groups of citizens, cheering him and shouting, "Down with the Jacobins!" But that evening these same Jacobins, gathered together at their club, attacked him with insults of unheard-of violence. Couthon discovered that the General was "the greatest of scoundrels", Robespierre that he was "the enemy of the fatherland." And the Girondins Brissot, Guadet and Lasource were in agreement with Camille Desmoulins in stigmatizing his behaviour in the harshest possible language.

Thus the General had to watch his last hope of starting a decisive movement in favour of the Constitution and the King wither away. Certainly majority opinion was on his side. During the day numerous National Guards demonstrated in front of his residence. The *Journée de Paris* for June 30 even reported that "a maypole was set up before his dwelling, dressed in the livery of Liberty." That is, with tricolour scarves. Yet the General was fully conscious of the fact that decisive action was out of his power. He did his utmost, together with his friends, to inspire the public with courage, and he pointed out what were the most urgent steps to be taken, trusting in La Rochefoucauld, president of the *Départementale* Assembly, to have them carried out.

When the day was done, powerless to solve the problem of remaining faithful to his King *and* to his principles, he sadly took the road back to the frontier. With him went the monarchy's last chance.

Chapter 17



THE INSURRECTION AGAINST LIBERTY LA FAYETTE GOES INTO EXILE

ONE word is particularly striking in La Fayette's *Mémoires* as they relate to this period: *anarchy*. Before leaving those officers who came to see him in Paris, he pointed out to them "the urgent necessity to unite all their efforts against the avowed undertakings of the anarchists". And in point of fact anarchy was taking possession of the kingdom, which had no effective government. Timorous Ministers, hampered and opposed by their predecessors of the Girondin party seeking to return to office, were to prove helpless against the factionists who had established a laboratory of insurrection in the peaceful chapel of the *ci-devant* Jacobin monastery.

Hardly had the General left to rejoin his army than his adversaries, relieved of the fear which his presence inspired in them, redoubled their abuse of "that rogue Mottié". Had he not, before quitting the capital, written yet another letter to the Assembly expressing his regret that he would not be able to inform the army that their country's representatives had deigned to take statutory action on the basis of his petition? Had he not again denounced "a sect which hampers the authorities, threatens their independence and which, having provoked the war, now strives, by misrepresenting your cause, to deprive it of its defenders"? The General was turning against the Jacobins that principle which he prided himself on having been the first in France to profess: that "all illegal power is oppressive and that resistance to it becomes a duty".

On July 2 an order of the day to the army drew attention to "the imminent danger to the Constitution and the King". Carrying out his friend's directions, La Rochefoucauld, presi-

dent of the *Départementale* Assembly, exerted himself to persuade that body to suspend the mayor, Pétion, and the procurator of the *Commune*, Manuel, for their conduct on June 20.

An event was about to stir public opinion very deeply. It was learned that the Prussian army was on the move. So great was its fame, since Frederick II, that invasion seemed certain. Thenceforth those who had done most to wreck the country's military resources were to become the most forward in demanding "exceptional measures" and in passing themselves off as the best, the only true patriots.

The position of the French troops, who had not received the reinforcements asked for, was far from brilliant, and indiscipline, born of internecine discord, was causing trouble. Foreseeing what must happen, Luckner and La Fayette sent a memorandum to the Ministry on July 6 advising the King to make peace. If only they had been listened to before it was too late!

In her harmonious poem entitled *l'Île de France* the *comtesse* de Noailles thus depicts the Girondins:

*Graves, leurs longs cheveux collés près du visage,
Debout sur une table au milieu des jardins,
Dans les soirs de juillet qu'ils semblent fous et sages,
Les sensibles, les chauds, les charmants Girondins!*

No political party, however moderate in appearance, could, given as much eloquence as clumsiness, fail to feed the fire destined to consume it. On July 3, in the Assembly, Vergniaud attributed the weakness of the country's defence to the King and involved La Fayette in his accusation. He reminded the Assembly that the Constitution envisaged the deposition of the King in the event of his failing to oppose a foreign invasion, that failure to be manifest in "a formal act". The speaker sought to identify as such a "formal act" either the refusal to establish a camp of reserves (the *fédérés* camp), or the leaving of the command-in-chief in La Fayette's hands. He asked the Assembly to inform the King officially of these anxieties and to declare the fatherland in danger.

During those first days of July the Assembly took a decision which was to be fraught with consequences. It passed a decree authorizing volunteer groups which were being formed in the

provinces to appear in Paris for the *fête* of the *Fédération*, before going on to their destination, a vast encampment which was to be set up near Soissons. At the same time plans were discussed for bringing the National Guard over to the popular party, by authorizing it to unite with the *fédérés* and by causing its General Staffs to submit themselves for re-election in all towns with a population in excess of fifty thousand souls.

Meanwhile, however, La Rochefoucauld had not hesitated to suspend Pétion and Manuel on July 6. On the 11th the King sanctioned this suspension, with a resulting increase of disturbances in the capital, where the situation was becoming more and more critical.

There was, however, a brief respite of calm on the 7th, when the constitutional bishop of Lyons, the deputy Lamourette, went to the tribune to deliver an eloquent speech appealing for union: "Let us swear to be all of one mind and one feeling, to merge ourselves in one single and same mass of free men dangerous alike to the spirit of anarchy and to the feudal spirit."

Great was the power of the word over a people whom even Caesar had declared exceptionally sensitive to the art of oratory! Deputies of the most opposed parties threw themselves into each other's arms, embracing and fraternizing. The King appeared in the Assembly and was cheered. "Nation and King", he proclaimed, "are one. Both have the same object. Their union will save France." He was escorted back to the Tuileries by a crowd of representatives. Alas! the "Lamourette Kiss"—so this session came to be called—was but a one-day triumph of brotherhood. The only beneficiaries of the reconciliation were Pétion and Manuel, the sanctions against them being revoked on July 13. On July 10 the discouraged Feuillant ministry made an effort to resign on the grounds that "it was impossible for them to maintain life and movement in a vast body all of whose members were paralysed, to defend the kingdom against the anarchy which, in this condition of public impotence, threatened to engulf everything". Their resignation was refused.

The anniversary of July 14, 1789, was drawing near. La Fayette was planning to take part in the celebrations and to seize the opportunity to remind all Frenchmen of their civic

duty; but the Minister for War wrote to the front saying that only Luckner was to be present.

On July 11, while the Prussians were advancing towards Lorraine, the Assembly declared: "All those who have a horror of liberty are taking up arms against our Constitution! Citizens, *la patrie est en danger!*" On the 12th the first of the *fédérés* (volunteers) arrived in Paris. On the 13th Robespierre, thundering in the Jacobins', accused La Fayette of meditating a crime against liberty. These things being so, the *fête* on the 14th was celebrated in the midst of intense agitation. The King and Queen were present, but the triumph was Pétion's, restored to his mayoral functions the previous evening. A "tree of feudalism", decorated with emblems of the *ancien régime*, was burned. Cries of "*Vive le roi!*" there were, indeed, but fewer than the cries of "*Vive la nation, vive la liberté!*" And citizens armed with pikes marched past shouting, "Pétion, or death!"

On the 17th there was an incident which severely inflamed minds already over-excited against La Fayette. This occurred at a supper given by Gobel, the bishop of Paris. Luckner was one of the guests and, in his *Mémoires*, Gilbert formally accuses the constitutional episcopal host of "having undertaken to get the Marshal drunk". According to the statements made to the Assembly the next day by the six deputies who were present, Luckner is supposed to have asserted that La Fayette had urged him, through an aide-de-camp messenger, Bureau de Puzy, to join him in marching on Paris at the head of their two armies. The deputy-delators Brissot, Guadet, Gensonné, Lamarque, Lasource and Delmas instigated a demand for an "investigation" of the generals. Luckner having left on July 19, La Fayette merely made a curt reply to the Minister of the Interior on the 26th: "Did I propose to M. le *maréchal* de Luckner to march on Paris with our armies? To which I reply with these very short words: that is not true."

Puzy brought copious explanations together with the correspondence of the two army commanders for the months of June and July. All in vain. The General's unpopularity was growing daily. "Truly, I believe that if M. de La Fayette arrived in Paris at this moment without his army," Gouverneur Morris wrote to Jefferson on August 1, "he would be hacked in pieces."

The General, however, considered that in July he had conceived a plan which, while not so final as his enemies' plan for *him*, might have saved the monarchy. The movements of the armies, a kind of *chassé-croisé*, carried out despite the opposition of the Jacobins, had brought the troops nearer to Paris. On about the 11th they were in the neighbourhood of La Capelle, relatively near to Compiègne, a royal residence situated within the "constitutional perimeter" about Paris, within which the King was allowed to move freely. La Fayette, acting through Lally-Tollendal, proposed a plan to Louis. From Compiègne the King, protected by the town's National Guard and two absolutely reliable regiments of *Chasseurs*, was to issue a proclamation to his brothers and the *émigrés* summoning them to advance no further and proclaiming himself ready to march against the foreigners in person if the Assembly agreed. He was also to make a declaration in favour of the Constitution which would leave nobody in any doubt of his feelings. Gilbert asserts in his *Mémoires* that if this had been done the King would probably have returned to Paris amidst the cheers of his people, an assertion which is proof positive of his illusion.

"We know very well that M. de La Fayette will save the King, but he will not save kingship." That was Tuileries opinion. To which Marie-Antoinette, recalling October 6, recalling likewise Mirabeau, not long before his death, saying that in the event of war La Fayette would try to hold the King prisoner in his tent, added: "It would be too mortifying to owe our lives to him a second time." She rejected the offer, telling the aide-de-camp La Colombe, "We are very grateful to your General, but the very best thing for us would be to be shut up in a tower for two months!", which was making the worst of it with a vengeance (*Mémoires*, Vol. 111, p. 345). More courteous, Louis made a different answer: "Tell him I am touched by the proof of attachment he has given me in thus proposing to run great risks on my behalf; but it would be imprudent to set so many wheels turning at the same time;¹ the surest way in which he can serve me is by continuing to be the terror of the factionists while ably doing his duty as a general."²

¹ "*faire mouvoir en même temps un si grand nombre de ressorts*".

² Bertrand de Molleville, Vol. 11, p. 294.

A proposal made by La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt to escort his King to his command headquarters at Le Havre where he could take ship for England, was also rejected. Mme Campan reports that the Queen, when alluding to this plan, simply said that rather than have recourse to M. de La Fayette, it was better to perish than to owe her salvation to the man who had done her the most harm and to be under the necessity of treating with him. At all events, the rejection of these proposals was very much to the credit of the unhappy sovereigns who, although perfectly aware of the danger threatening their lives, nevertheless remained courageously at their post.

Public excitement and agitation increased after July 14. On the 22nd, cannon were fired to call the citizens to volunteer for the army. A decree promulgated the "state of danger" not as a law but as an act of the Assembly to avoid any question of a royal *veto*. Attacks against La Fayette increased in number and he was accused, from the tribune, of deserting his post and of violating the Constitution.¹ Nor was the King handled any more gently: on the 23rd Choudieu proposed his deposition "for the safety of France".

On July 26 the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto put a spark to the powder. As is well known the Court had, by means of a Swiss journalist, Mallet du Pan, been in communication with the Commander-in-Chief of the army of invasion. The original idea was to make clear to the French in general the danger they were incurring because of their repeated attacks on the King and religion. But the less prudent elements among the *émigrés* had procured a heightening of the terms of the declaration as originally planned, the final draft being, it seems, chiefly the work of the *marquis* Geoffroy de Limon, with some modifications made at the Tuileries, where the Queen was still under the influence of Count Fersen, another far from level-headed loyalist. The manifesto called for immediate submission to the King: "any National Guard caught with arms in his hands would

¹ *Correspondance secrète* for July 13 emphasizes that the people were excessively prejudiced against the General: the new plans the King was supposed to be entertaining were attributed to him; he was suspected of communicating with Bouillé, and it was observed that in Favras' testimony he had been destined for the office of *Connétable*.

be treated as a rebel; any inhabitants daring to defend themselves would be put to death and their houses burned down". Finally, after threats against members of the Assembly, of the *Départements* directories, municipalities and National Guard, the manifesto added that if the least outrage were done to the royal family and unless its safety were immediately provided for, their Imperial and Royal Majesties would hand Paris over to military execution and total destruction.¹

Nothing could have been clumsier. Brunswick himself was subsequently to express his regrets: "I would give my life never to have signed that manifesto." The King received a copy on July 26 and was imprudent enough to send it to the Assembly, while expressing doubts as to its authenticity.

Its effects were to be decisive and to wreck the last efforts of the moderates. On the 26th Condorcet issued an appeal to the King—"Save the fatherland and the crown." The Girondins approached the King offering a pact and asking him to help the nation to repulse the enemy by getting rid of La Fayette; but the proposal was not accepted and the King did no more than re-form his ministry with men as inactive as their predecessors. Pétion put off the rising which was being planned, but on the following day, July 27, authorized the sections to set up a permanent bureau at the Hôtel de Ville. On the same day the jurist Robespierre, relying on the fact that his suspension was terminated as far as the King was concerned, called for a National Convention.

Processions of *fédérés* through the streets: after the Bretons, who arrived on the 25th, the Marseillais entered Paris on the 30th, with three cannon and to the tune and words of the *Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin* which, accordingly, was called the *Marseillaise*. Invited by Santerre to a banquet in the Champs-Élysées, they quarrelled with a royalist battalion of the National Guard and blood was spilled. Many of them had joined up for the 15 sous pay.² Biron said of them: "They are men bought by the communes and most of them vagabonds." But Brunswick's manifesto gave these people at least the pretext of being an element of the great patriotic awakening, whereas it did Louis

¹ "subversion".

² About 9d. in English money of that time.—*Trans.*

the greatest possible harm by making him appear as a *protégé* of the enemy.

Even so, can it be said to have been the chief cause of the insurrection? The rising was openly planned: every evening, at the Jacobins', speakers discussed it. And in the Assembly, taking up a demand put forward by Bazire on July 15, Jean Debry, the fanatic who had proposed the formation of a corps of one thousand two hundred "tyrannicides" whose business it would be to seek and strike down all the kings in Europe, called for an indictment against La Fayette, whom the factionists regarded as their principal enemy, which proposal was supported by Brissot despite the fact that on the day before he had declared, "La Fayette is the man I esteem most highly." The General was ardently defended by Vaublanc, Limousin and Dumolard. In taking a vote on the debate the nominal roll had to be called. Despite attacks and calumnies the indictment was rejected by 406 votes to 224. The independents voted for the General.

"As they left," says La Fayette, "the most respectable members of the Assembly were assaulted with stones, sticks and sabres——" Again, "On August 9 almost the whole Assembly rose to declare that it was no longer free." And, in fact, the next day, the 10th, was, in his own expression, "to mark the transition from the era of liberty to that of terror and *incivisme*".

There are still obscurities in the history of that day. The Queen was counting on Danton, who had been paid 50,000 crowns to keep down disturbances, and Madame Elisabeth assured Montmorin that the insurrection would not take place, Santerre and Pétion having given an undertaking to that effect in exchange for 750,000 *livres*. But the factions, Jacobins, agents of the Orléans party, never ceased agitating, openly or not, with a view to firing the powder train. The freemason Anacharsis Clootz, chairman of the Jacobins' club, was planning the movement; an extremely suspicious character, he was, among other things, a correspondent of the Duke of Brunswick. In his study *La Prusse et la Révolution française*, Pouget de Saint-André states that about eight days before the insurrection the Jacobin's secret committee had thoughts of replacing Louis XVI by the Duke of York, or by Brunswick whose manifesto, in that case,

might have been a Machiavellian stroke! At all events, it is certain that the agitators were finding favourably disposed elements in the *faubourgs*, elements which had already been well "blooded". For, as early as 1789, the pillage of the Réveillon paper factory had had a markedly social-revolutionary flavour, pointed out by André Castelot in his *Philippe-Égalité*. It was to reappear three years later.

Rioters and insurrectionaries could, in any case, always count on support from dubious elements which, in all great cities, are always ready to join in a rising. As for Paris, Corneille had already written:

*Il y vient de tous lieux des gens de toute sorte,
Et dans toute la France, il est fort peu d'endroits
Dont il n'ait le rebut aussi bien que le choix.*¹

A mob, led by Westermann, a clerk at Haguenau, surged over the Tuileries.

La Fayette had judged that his proper place, like that of his ancestors, was with the armies. This was, perhaps, regrettable. In Paris he had virtually played the part of prefect of police, rarely hesitating to compromise his popularity out of loyalty to the King and public order. His successors at the head of the National Guard had neither his prestige nor his tactical abilities. Although the civic militia, itself contaminated, had also lost the people's favour, its discipline, given carefully chosen units, would still have been sufficient to put down the rising. Had it still been led by its former commander it is possible that there would have been neither "June 20" nor "August 10". For it is clear from the number of deputies who voted for him that partisans of the General were still numerous.

The tragic events of August 10 are history: the summoning of Mandat, Chief of the National Guard, to the Hôtel de Ville, by the Commune; his encounter with Danton, who removed him from his command; his assassination; the assault on the château; the heroic resistance of the *Suisses*, the gentlemen attendants and a part of the National Guard. Louis had not, unfortunately,

¹ "There come from every place people of every sort

And in all France there are very few places

From which it (Paris) does not get the scum as well as the pick."

And see Albert Babeau, *Paris en 1789*, pp. 342, *et seq.*

taken advantage of recent changes which left all decrees concerning the organization of his personal guard to him. The *Suisses*, despite being natives of a republic, proved the most ardent defenders of the monarchy. They actually had the situation in hand when an order from the King, incorrectly informed, removed this last obstacle. The Assembly voted a decree suspending the King and laying down a plan of education for the prince his heir. The royal family was imprisoned in the Temple.

La Fayette was not the man to accept this sort of thing. It was in vain that the Jacobins, afraid of his influence, tried to mislead public opinion by announcing in their news-sheet that he had approved the day's events. The Assembly sent the deputies Kersaint, Antonelle and Péraldi to Sedan as commissioners to the armies. The mayor of Sedan had the "so-called commissioners" arrested.

Malouet, paying homage to the General, wrote truly when he said that he was true to himself and consistent in his actions. According to Gilbert's *Mémoires* the commissioners' mission was to arrest those generals believed to belong to the King's party, but it was not the personal danger in which he stood that prompted his conduct. On August 12, the evening before the commissioners arrived, he had informed his army, "almost all of which were surprised and indignant", of what had happened on the 10th, he having learned the facts from a guard who escaped the massacre. He was resolved not to bow to the storm, but what was he to do? To march on Paris would be to leave a gap in the country's defences open to the enemy, now nearly within sight. He placed his hopes in the existence—he still believed in it—of numerous loyal *Départements*, for had not seventy-five of them approved his declaration of June 16? The Aisne, Meuse and Ardennes seemed to him well disposed. His plan was to form a kind of congress of these *Départements* which would oppose any authority won by violence. So that on August 13 he was as immovable as stone in the face of the commissioners' pleas and threats.

Not that his enemies had any illusions about the possibility of gaining support for their violent acts from the defender of lawful order. On August 12 Anthoine had called for his condemnation, and on the 19th the Assembly issued an indictment

against him, after an all-night session in the course of which much was made of a letter said to have been found in Marie-Antoinette's desk, wherein La Fayette is supposed to have suggested that the Queen should arrange to have the King insulted, so as to give him, La Fayette, an excuse to strike a decisive blow.¹ On the 10th, his bust, in the Hôtel de Ville, had been deliberately smashed: this time it was no longer a question of an effigy, however, but of his own, living head.

On August 17, the Executive Council summoned him to hand over his command to Dumouriez, preparatory to putting him on trial two days later. Bouillé, in his *Mémoires*, notes in harsh terms: "La Fayette, who had replaced me in command of my army, was obliged, at the moment when, repenting of his errors, he was beginning to wish to serve his King and the monarchy, to desert and fly his country." This accusation, taken up by the Belgian historian Dansaert, appears to us unjust, as does the stigma of *émigration*. It is understandable that, even apart from any question of his principles, the General should not have wished to serve in armies destined to fight against troops he had commanded. At one moment he planned to go to Paris alone. It would have been suicide. He realized that what he considered "a sacred resistance to oppression" was no longer possible. His own account of his situation is as follows: "Nothing remained to him but to seek asylum in a neutral country in order to remove his proscribed head from the executioner's grasp and in the hope that he might one day again serve Liberty and France."

His motives were, incidentally, made clear in his *Adieux aux magistrats de Sedan*, dated from Bouillon on August 19: "Possessed by grief at being no longer able, for the time being, to be of use to my country, my sole consolation will be in ardent prayers for the cause of liberty and equality, profaned, if profaned it can be, by the crimes of a faction, that it be at least not long in bonds; and in renewing my oath, to a truly patriot commune, to be faithful to the principles which have animated my entire life."

A curious coincidence: it was at Bouillon that Napoleon III spent his first night in captivity on September 3, 1870, after the disaster at Sedan.

¹ *Correspondance secrète* for August 18, 1792, Vol. 11, p. 617.

Chapter 18



THE SOLDIER OF LIBERTY A PRISONER

THE last orders given by La Fayette before crossing the frontier show him as anxious to ensure the safety of his troops. He ordered the forward units to fall back behind the Chiers, a move upon which he subsequently congratulates himself in his *Mémoires*:

The attack planned by General Clairfayt, upon hearing of his [La Fayette's] departure, could not be carried out, since the French Army was very well placed and entrenched.

At Bouillon he sent back his escort and even his orderlies, "not wanting his [La Fayette's] departure to deprive the fatherland of a single one of its defenders who were still permitted to serve their country". Then, on the 19th, pretending he had to carry out a reconnaissance, he crossed the frontier with twenty-one officers of his staff, all under suspicion of adherence to the King's party, among them Bureau de Puzy, Latour-Maubourg and his two brothers; later they were joined by Alexandre de Lameth, a victim, like La Fayette, of an indictment.

Seven leagues from Bouillon, after dark, the group stumbled against enemy outposts at Rochefort. Their horses were exhausted. Puzy was sent forward to parley with the Austrians. He was courteously welcomed by M. d'Harnoncourt, who, without throwing doubt on La Fayette's right, nevertheless insisted upon their having a passport issued by General Moitelle, commanding the Namur garrison, before they could be allowed to go any further.

Gilbert's intentions are made clear in a letter which he wrote to his wife on August 21:

I am going to England where I wish all my family to join me. Let us settle down in America: there we shall find that freedom which no longer exists in France.

And he added, not without pride, "I have maintained the Constitution to which I swore, alone and to the last." His plan was to get to Holland, a neutral country, where he could take ship.

Informed of the news, General Moitelle flew into a transport of joy—"La Fayette, La Fayette!—run instantly and inform the *duc de Bourbon*." He could not cease from exclaiming, "La Fayette, La Fayette!" And turning to the officer who had brought the news, "You must go post-chaise and carry this news to his Royal Highness."

The passport was refused. The fugitives were taken by an escort of *Hussards* to Namur, where the General and his companions refused to give their parole to the *marquis de Chasteler* and the *prince de Lorraine*. They did not consider themselves as prisoners and proposed to keep their freedom of action. In the face of this attitude Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen, speaking to Major von Paulus on August 24, said, "Since M. de La Fayette and these other gentlemen refuse to give their parole, it's as good as a warning to guard them closely." He added that he could not dispose of them until he had received orders from the Emperor.

On the 25th, however, the General and his suite were transferred to Nivelles. He was still able to write to his aunt, Mme de Chavaniac: "In any case my misfortunes have changed neither my principles, my feelings, nor my language." A letter sent at the same time to his friend Alexandre-Louis de La Rochefoucauld was never received, the duke having been foully murdered by the Jacobins at Gisors.

Meanwhile the Austrian government was demonstrating not only its cupidity but its total failure to understand the character of La Fayette, whose disinterestedness was never in any doubt: an order was given for the treasure which he must have brought with him to be seized. It provoked a superbly insolent answer from the General: "Doubtless, in my place their Royal Highnesses would have brought it."

But this proud bearing was hardly calculated to dispose his enemies in his favour. Taken to Arlon on September 2, thence to Luxembourg where he arrived on the 4th, he there learned that a passport had been refused him by the Duke of

Saxe-Teschen, who proposed to keep him "until his sovereign, in his clemency or justice, had decided his fate". The committee of the Coalition had decided "that La Fayette's existence was incompatible with the safety of Europe's government".

From Luxembourg he was again moved, with a Prussian escort, towards Trèves, then on the 15th to Coblenz, to arrive finally, on the 18th, at Wesel on the Rhine, further north than Ehrenbreitstein, which was no doubt considered still too near to France for such a dangerous prisoner. It is interesting to note that d'Hézèques, who in his *Souvenirs d'un page* sometimes deals very severely with Gilbert, states that, "hounded by the Jacobins who wanted his head, he was arrested contrary to all human rights". The same opinion is to be found in the *comte de Montlosier's Souvenirs*.¹

This question is not quite so simple. On August 19 at Rochefort the General and those who were with him had signed a declaration in the following terms: "The undersigned, French citizens . . . declare that they cannot be considered as enemy soldiers, since they have renounced their positions in the French Army, and still less as [belonging to] that section of their compatriots whom interests, sentiments and opinions utterly opposed to their own have led to ally themselves with the powers at war with France, but as foreigners claiming the free passage to which human rights entitle them and which they will employ to betake themselves promptly to a territory whose government is not at present in a state of hostility against their government."²

As we have seen already, the Duke of Saxe-Teschen was not of that opinion and had, on August 24, given Major von Paulus orders which ran counter to it. His written orders were, "Major von Paulus will inform them that M. de La Fayette, and those of his suite cannot deny having hitherto been manifestly our enemies, that they have waged war on us, that they have not come to our country as *émigrés*, but still imbued with their former principles, they would still have been our enemies if it were not that they ran the risk of being knocked on the head

¹ Recently published by Hachette, 1951. It should be added that the medallions struck in La Fayette's honour were solemnly broken in the *place de Grève*.

² *Mémoires*, Vol. III, p. 409.

now by the very populace which they roused against their King. . . . Moreover, M. de La Fayette and his suite having tried to slip through furtively, thereby accused themselves of realizing that we had a right to arrest them, and finally that a troop of fifty armed men . . . could not freely cross any country in the world especially in wartime, and that any government has the right, in revolutionary periods, to take necessary precautions when dealing with persons whose sentiments do not inspire confidence."¹

On the day of his arrest La Fayette had written to Short, United States minister at The Hague: "I am an American citizen, an American officer. I am no longer in French service."

He hoped thereby to persuade the U.S. to claim him, but Short told Gouverneur Morris that he could not interfere, "La Fayette having been taken as a Frenchman, not as an American."

At Wesel the prisoners were submitted to a rigorous and inhuman regimen: double doors with locks and padlocks; letters, even to or from nearest relatives, forbidden; Latour-Maubourg learned, through the indiscretion of a gaoler, that his friend had been taken ill for want of fresh air. He asked that at the very least, should Gilbert's condition become critical, he be allowed to be present at his dying. This was refused.

Frederick-William did not give up hope of obtaining "advice against France" from La Fayette. In that event he could count on an improvement in his lot. To which Gilbert answered only, "The King of Prussia is very impertinent." The sole exception to the rule against all correspondence was permission to write to the King's adjutant-general, of which Gilbert took advantage to inform him "that he was far from denying co-operation in the French and American revolutions". On another occasion, recalling that the powers involved in the coalition against France had recognized the Constitution, he predicted that "the hatred of liberty with or without royalty would only serve to increase the number of republicans". From September 18 to December 31 the friend of liberty and the Constitution remained intractable, as a result of which his prison was changed: he was interned at Magdeburg in the heart of Germany.

¹ Cf., Max Budinger, *La Fayette in Österreich, Vienna, 1875.*

The *comte* d'Espinchal relates that, in the course of the journey, at Hamm, he was lodged at an inn and that *Monsieur* and the *comte* d'Artois arrived while he was there. There was, of course, no communication between the princes and their suites, and the prisoners. However, the *comte* de Damas was authorized by *Monsieur* to see La Fayette, in recognition of the favours he had received from him while the *comte* had been interned in Paris after the King's arrest at Varennes.¹

The General and his friends were to remain at Magdeburg for a year (January 4, 1793—January 4, 1794). But the prison has not been built in which a prisoner, by using his intelligence or by contriving to receive news, cannot manage to communicate with the world outside the walls. From time to time La Fayette got hold of a sheet of paper on which he wrote with a toothpick dipped in soot. It is from these letters, sent to Mme d'Hénin, a refugee in England, that we know something of what he suffered. On July 16, 1793, he wrote:

I do not write to my aunt, nor to my wife and children; the inviolability of the mails so dear to me, no longer exists, for my writing is familiar in the capital and in the eighty-three *Départements*; but I am counting on you to give her news of me.

He describes his cell:

A hole, six paces by four, dug out beneath the ramparts, the damp ceiling and mouldy walls receive some light, but never the sun, through a small, barred window, the whole surrounded by a high palisade, and reached through four bolted and barred doors to which (*since the constitutional proclamation*) a fifth is being added; here is a plan of my lodging. It has been decorated with an inscription based on two pleasant *bouts-rimés*: *souffrir* and *mourir*.²

A martyr for his faith, he wrote to Mme d'Hénin on June 22:

Liberty is the constant subject of my solitary meditations . . . It is what one of my friends once called my "holy madness". And whether some miracle releases me from here, or whether I testify upon the scaffold, "liberty, equality" will be my final words. Here, I can fight against the tyrants only for my soul and my body. The former not only defends itself but builds up my physical strength,

¹ *Revue rétrospective*, 1894, p. 212.

² "Suffer and die."—*Trans.*

and the feeling of resistance to oppression is, for me, an excellent physician.

These people must think they have the devil in prison. What Cardinal de Retz called "the ridiculous in the abominable" is here met with every day.

And it is touching to find him concerned over the fate of the negroes cultivating his property in Cayenne.

"I hope", he wrote to his correspondent in March 1793, asking after them and his estate, "that the Blacks who cultivate it still keep their liberty".

His spirit remained unbroken: he was visited by the brother of the Duke of Brunswick, whom he called "the great manifestoist". And wrote concerning it, "As you will understand, I disdained making any complaint of my lot." They had talked of current events and what he called "Dumouriez's treason". He noted, not with self-satisfaction, "I was right when I said that the establishment of the National Guard would baffle the calculations of all Europe."

It seems, however, that little by little the prisoner began receiving the benefit of interventions on his behalf. As early as March 1793 he related that the United States had deposited a thousand florins at Magdeburg for his use—"which" he wrote, "will prevent me from having to live on bread and water when my money runs out". Instead of the obvious attempts to ruin the prisoners' health by keeping them ruthlessly shut up, short walks in the small prison garden were authorized. In October Gilbert managed to get news through to his wife, informing her that his health was better, that he was being allowed a little fresh air and some books. On the previous July 4 he had, owing to the direct intervention of Pinckney, the United States minister, had the joy of learning that Adrienne and the children were still alive.

At the beginning of 1794 the captives were taken to Neisse, whence, despite their request not to be parted entirely, Latour-Maubourg was sent to Glatz, where, two months later, he was joined by Bureau de Puzy. Subsequently they were recalled for ten days to Neisse, and from there all the prisoners were sent to Olmütz, under Austrian escort, as the result of a decision made on May 17.

During the last days at Neisse the General was able to see his two friends again. Latour-Maubourg even having his sister with him, Mme de Maison-Neuve, who had received permission to join him at Glatz and did not leave him until he left for Austria. La Fayette was able to see the gazettes and learned of the execution of M. du Châtelet and de Malesherbes: he wrote to Mme d'Hénin on May 16, "It is with these heartbreaking thoughts and with all the fears arising from them, that I am leaving tomorrow, as are Maubourg and Puzy, to be handed over to the Austrian escort which is to take us, they say, to a fortress in Moravia."

What was the object of this transfer? It is readily explicable. The Prussian government had not been entirely free from annoyances of its own as a result of La Fayette's incarceration. Apart from United States moves in his interest, the General had sympathizers even in Berlin itself, according to official Austrian archives in Vienna. At the beginning of 1794 Princess Wilhelmina and Prince Henry of Prussia persuaded the Authorities to issue a statement according to which they were no longer willing to put up with "the vexations of La Fayette's arrest". The Austrians had arrested La Fayette: it was up to them to take charge of him.

Concerning the transfer, Mme de La Fayette was later to write to her aunt, Mme de Tessé:

On their arrival at Olmütz the gentlemen were stripped of the little the Prussians had left them, which amounted to no more than their watches and their garter and collar buckles: even some books, in which the name of liberty appeared, were confiscated, notably "*L'Esprit*" and "*Le Sens Commun*", whereupon M. de La Fayette asked them, "whether the Government regarded them as contraband?" On being shut into their cells each of them was informed that "henceforth they would see nothing but those four walls, that they would receive news of nothing and nobody, that the uttering of their names, even between the gaolers and in dispatches to the Court was forbidden, they were to be referred to only by their numbers; that they could receive no reassurance concerning [even] the existence of their families, nor concerning each other's existence. As this situation was naturally conducive

to taking their own lives, they had been forbidden knives, forks and all means of suicide,—

to the latter injunction La Fayette had replied "that he was not so obliging as to take his own life".

And in his *Mémoires* he rightly calls these cruelties "cowardly refinements of vengeance". For on July 17, Jourdan, who had also, as a very young man taken part in the American war, defeated the Duke of Saxe-Coburg at Fleurus, and the Austrians lost Belgium, a disaster which no doubt enhanced their irritation with the prisoners. From May 1794 until July 1797, Gilbert was not authorized to write a single letter.

In these conditions his health rapidly deteriorated and the prison physician stated that permission to take the air was necessary to the preservation of his life. The doctor had to make this point three times before permission was granted.

Once it was granted it was to give the General a chance to attempt an escape. In the autumn of 1794 this chance was offered him by a young Hanoverian, Ehrlich Bullman, who shared his political ideas and dreamed of setting him free. In a Viennese café Bullman had met an American, the son of that Major Huger on whose property La Fayette had landed upon his first arrival in America. It was with this young man that Bullman worked out a plan which, today, would make the subject of a most exciting film. Posing as English naturalists, Bullman and Huger waited on horseback for the carriage in which the prisoner was being driven. La Fayette seized upon his guard's sabre, under the pretext of admiring it, but there followed a struggle during which Gilbert left part of a finger between the Austrian corporal's teeth and twisted his back. Then his liberators rode up and the guard, threatened by their pistols, took to his heels. Overcoming his pain, La Fayette mounted one of the conspirator's two horses, Bullman and Huger riding the other and setting off at a gallop.

But they were already being pursued. They were about to be overtaken when the American sacrificed himself by dismounting, thus lightening the horse. The other two set off again at a frantic gallop. Bullman yelled, in English, "Get to Hof!", referring to a village where, no doubt, a change of horses was waiting. La Fayette thought he said "Get off", which means

"go straight on".¹ The misunderstanding was fatal: he was recaptured at Sternberg, eight leagues from Olmütz, after having wildly breathed the air of freedom. His accomplices, victims of their courage and devotion, were also arrested.

A new commander at Olmütz, General Arco, informed the fugitive, immediately upon his return to his cell, that his liberators would be hanged outside his window, "adding that he would willingly play the hangman himself".²

Outings and books were forbidden and the faithful servant who had remained with the General was taken away from him. Furthermore he was deprived of light and seemed destined to an atrocious existence, when there occurred an event he can hardly have foreseen and which was to restore hope and his taste for life.

Latour-Maubourg had written from Glatz to La Fayette, who was then at Neisse, that his sister was voluntarily sharing his prison. On March 6 Gilbert wrote back, "I have not been favoured by any apparitions in my cell, but I imagine that a consoling angel would have the same face." And now the miracle was to be wrought for him, as well as for his friend. Wifely love, radiant in the lovely and noble figure of Adrienne, accomplished it. That energetic and pious lady showed nothing less than sheer heroism on behalf of the man she loved.

The triumph of the terrorists in France entailed an orgy of blood-letting. The tyrants showed themselves all the more fervent in terrorism in that they were managing to make their dictatorship profitable. The kinsfolk of *émigrés* were harassed and pursued and all their property confiscated. Gilbert's family and friends had the doubtful privilege of being threatened by both Jacobins and the foreign enemy.³

¹ I have translated this exactly as it stands in the text. There is, it seems, a mistake somewhere. "Get off" might have caused La Fayette to dismount, but hardly to ride straight on unless he understood it to mean "get off without me". Even that is rather hard to understand. But neither of them used English as their mother-tongue.—*Trans.*

² From the letter, quoted above, from Mme de La Fayette to Mme de Tessé.

³ Thus the National Archives contain indications of the arrest of one *sieur* Maguin, a servant at Sedan, bearer of suspicious letters and whose

Adrienne, having herself been imprisoned for sixteen months and only released on January 22, 1795, at the instance of Monroe, the new United States minister in Paris, began by sending her son George to America, furnished with a letter of recommendation to Washington. Then, having obtained a passport for herself, she took her two daughters to Dunkirk and embarked for Hamburg aboard an American ship. At Altona she found Mme de Montagu and Mme de Tessé. As the French were not permitted to enter Austria, she obtained, with the help of the American Consul at Hamburg, a passport for Vienna under the name of Mottié, native of Hartford, Connecticut, one of the States of the Union of which La Fayette and his family were naturalized citizens.

With the help of the old *prince* von Rosenberg, she obtained an audience with the Emperor, without the knowledge of his ministers, and asked him the favour of being allowed to share her husband's captivity. His answer was: "I consent to it. But you will find M. de La Fayette well fed and well treated. Your presence will be an additional comfort." The Emperor could not, however, grant the prisoner his freedom: "It would be impossible: my hands are tied." And in fact the minister von Thugut received her with hostility. "Every expression he used", wrote Mme de Lasteyrie, "showed a feeling of hatred for my father which he was unable to hide." And her mother, she tells us, "did not wish, at a moment when arrangements were being made to exchange the *duchesse* de France for the Convention deputies who were held prisoner, to point out the unseemliness of retaining him who had been proscribed for having defended Louis XVI, in captivity, while releasing those who had voted for his death. She would have reproached herself for uttering an unfavourable word about any prisoner."

The permission she had asked for was finally granted, Adrienne persisting in her resolve despite the warning of M. de

mission would seem to have been to indicate a safe retreat for La Fayette's family and friends in the event of an Austrian invasion. *Côte W.* 251, No. 6. And on 4 frimaire, year II, an individual named Niquille was seeking proofs of relations, which the *baron* de Batz might have had with one Abhéma, a rich Dutchman already denounced by him as being in secret touch with La Fayette. Reference: *W.* 76, No. 9.

Ferraris, Minister for War, who told her that she would be very badly off and that the conditions might entail serious harm to herself and her daughters. She was quite ready to sacrifice herself, knowing exactly what she was doing, in order to share her husband's lot.

Mme de La Fayette crossed the threshold of Olmütz prison on October 1, 1795. Her daughter who, together with her younger sister, shared her mother's internment, says that her mother was struck by the change in the General's countenance: his health was gravely affected. The captive's surprise, and his joy, for he had not been forewarned, were such that his wife could not bring herself to cast him down again by telling him that she had lost her grandmother, her mother and her sister to the guillotine. She did not speak of this until later. An engraving, illustrating *L'Héroïde* by Charles d'Agrain (who published a poem on La Fayette in 1797), shows the wife arriving and throwing herself into her husband's arms while the younger of the two daughters, on her knees, clasps his hand. A scene Greuze might have painted. Henceforth Adrienne's presence was to light the captivity of the hero of liberty.

That draconian regulations (far more rigorous than those of the Bastille) should have been applied to a prisoner who had tried to escape is perhaps excusable; but it is impossible not to feel indignation at the way women, who had transgressed in nothing, were treated. Their purses were looted; three silver forks, even, were confiscated, forcing them to eat with their fingers. Although Mass was regularly celebrated in a church which was part of the building where they were imprisoned, they were forbidden to attend it despite a request sent to Ferraris before Christmas. However much Adrienne insisted, she could obtain no concessions, excepting that of writing unsealed letters to her sister, Mme de Montagu, and to the banker who was advancing money to feed the prisoners, but never to her son. Deprived of fresh air, she fell ill. In February 1796 the Emperor gave her permission to see a specialist in Vienna, provided she did not return to Olmütz. She refused. Deprived of all domestic help, her illness grew rapidly worse, but between October 1796 and September 1797 she could get no improvement of her conditions allowed. By means, however, of bribes paid by her

banker, she was able to write to Mme de Tessé in May. She had "more to eat than was necessary", but "Everything is inexpressibly dirty." And, her mind turning towards her beloved victims of the Terror, she began writing the life of her mother, the *duchesse d'Ayen*, with a toothpick and a small quantity of Chinese ink, in the margins of the engravings in a copy of *Buffon*.

More pity is sometimes to be found in those of obscure and subaltern position than in their superiors whose minds are often narrow and rigid. The prisoners lowered good meals through the bars of their window, and by means of a cord, to the soldiers of the guard, who, in return, carried an occasional package to Maubourg or Puzy. A system of signalling, by means of a pan-pipe, had also been established between the General's secretary and Puzy's servant. Finally, in the letter written to her aunt, she notes that although their conditions remained unchanged, there was a marked improvement in their gaolers' manners. "At each French victory, at each vigorous letter in our favour, we notice a shade more. . . ." Fear is frequently the beginning of better feeling.

From all sides, even from Germany, there were more and more protests at the treatment of the prisoners. The rector of Olmütz began sending them news of public events; La Fayette conversed with his doctor in Latin. In London, in the House of Commons, a motion introduced by General Fitzpatrick and taken up by Fox resulted in a violent debate (December 16, 1796) in the prisoners' favour which only came to nothing, despite the efforts of Sheridan and Wilberforce, when it was opposed by Pitt. On May 15 of the same year Washington had written to the Emperor to ask him to grant the General permission to go to the United States. In Paris, with the Directory in power, opinion was moving in his favour, seeming to respond to Charles d'Agrain's poem, which begins with these words, put into the mouth of liberty's martyr:

*Dans ces sombres cachots, image des enfers,
Courbé depuis cinq ans sous le poids de mes fers,
Moi captif, moi l'ami, le défenseur des hommes. . . .*¹

¹ "In these gloomy cells, image of infernal regions,
These five years bent beneath the weight of my irons,
I, a captive, I, the friend, the defender of mankind. . . ."

and which jeers at,

*Des monarques huissiers arrêtant La Fayette.*¹

By signing the Treaty of Bâle, Prussia, Spain and Holland had withdrawn from the fight, leaving Austria to bear the brunt of it. The youthful Bonaparte was winning his first victories in Italy, resulting in the peace preliminaries of Leoben on April 15, 1797. Mme de Staël, taking La Fayette's case to heart, approached Barras, who wrote to Bonaparte. On May 5 Carnot gave Clarke instructions whereby he could get the prisoners released provisionally. He told him: "Our national honour requires that they be released from cells in which they are kept only because they started the Revolution." Interminable negotiations began. The Emperor agreed to La Fayette and his friends going to America, but would not allow them to remain in Austria or go to France. Despite the efforts of the *marquis* de Chasteler, sent by Thugut, this solution was rejected by the prisoners themselves. On July 25 they issued a statement: they were determined to keep their freedom of action and would only agree not to re-enter any Austrian State—which is readily understandable—and to make no complaint on the subject of their captivity. After more long talks carried on by Romeuf, the General's former aide-de-camp and the companion of his flight, Thugut at last announced that the Emperor would not require a written or verbal agreement and that liberty would be granted if La Fayette and his friends were provided with a place to go. A note from Clarke and Bonaparte had warned one of the Austrian negotiators, von Gallo, that the prisoners would not be allowed to enter France. The Emperor tried to save his face by saying that his action had been dictated by consideration for the United States.

A final letter from Romeuf, dated September 17, 1797, protesting to Thugut, at last opened the prison gates on the 19th. One month later, October 17, the Treaty of Campo-Formio, which returned Belgium, where the General had been captured, to France, contained a clause stipulating the release of the prisoners.

¹ "Bailiff-monarchs detaining La Fayette."

Chapter 19



EXILE

LA FAYETTE was unable to return to France by reason of the decrees against *émigrés*, notably that of October 6, 1792, which had confiscated their property. A cruel paradox!—the majority of those same *émigrés* being the General's most savage enemies. (At Vienna, in October 1796 Gouverneur Morris was sickened at hearing one of them, Lavaupallière, apparently rejoicing because "there was still a chance that it might be possible to hang La Fayette". The American answered, "I say it is madness to keep him in prison.")

Gilbert and his party left the Emperor's domains on September 19, 1797, under the escort of the Austrian Major Annerhammer. He had a brief glimpse of the always devoted Romeuf, but was not able to speak with him until they reached Dresden. Through Dresden, Leipzig, Halle and Hamburg their journey was "A perpetual triumph." Adrienne, although she was exhausted, forced herself to respond to the homage offered to her. At Hamburg, which they reached on October 5, the enthusiasm was just as great. The poet Klopstock, author of the *Messiad*, came to salute and embrace the hero of liberty.

The General was displaying the tricolour cockade, to distinguish himself clearly from the *émigrés*. The *comte d'Hézèques*, Louis XVI's former page, maliciously claims in his *Souvenirs* that the following notice was fixed to his door: "You are hereby forewarned that M. de La Fayette will not be at home to visitors until noon today, as he is accustomed to sleep late on October 6."—thus recalling an accusation long disposed of by eye-witnesses of the Versailles troubles.

At Hamburg the liberated prisoners were taken to the house

of Mr Parish, former United States consul. France being forbidden them, and Adrienne's health not being good enough to enable her to make the Atlantic crossing, they decided, after discussing the matter with their host, to go to the Danish province of Holstein, since Holland might be involved in the hostilities. As soon as he left prison the General had been greatly disturbed by the news, in the first Gazette he happened to see, of the *coup d'État* of 18 fructidor (night of September 4). This was the action taken by the Directory against the Assemblies—the Council of Elders and the Five Hundred which, since the elections, had included two hundred and fifty monarchist deputies. The Republic was sweeping away the one body which had stood consistently for the Constitution.

Nevertheless on October 6, the day after he arrived in Hamburg, the General wrote to Bonaparte, Talleyrand and General Clarke. The letters to the last two have been lost, but their author kept a copy of the letter to Bonaparte. "Citizen General, the prisoners of Olmütz, happy to owe their deliverance to your irresistible arms, rejoiced during their captivity in the thought that their liberty and their life were associated with the Republic's triumphs and your personal glory." The letter went on to thank him to whom they were "even more attached because of the service he had done the cause of liberty and our fatherland". The reference to the cause of liberty was, perhaps, hardly tactful. In that chapter of his *Mémoires* entitled "On leaving prison" La Fayette notes, "We were as inflexible against the violations of 18 fructidor as against those of August 10." The Directory hastened to confiscate a remnant of Gilbert's property which remained to him in Brittany.

Another cause of sorrow to him was the bad feeling which had arisen between the United States and France, involving fighting between ships of the two nations over the question of trading with England, with which country the Americans had just signed a trade treaty. On October 8, writing to express his gratitude to Huger, the General told him that "upon leaving prison his joy had been greatly diminished by the afflicting and unexpected news of these disagreements".

La Fayette and his party did not remain long in Hamburg.

Among many letters of goodwill, he had received one from Mme de Staël which included these words: "Come straight to France: there is no other country for you. There you will find the Republic which your principles envisaged, while your conscience still bound you to royalty."

But the hour for his return had not yet come. On October 10 the exiles arrived in Witmold, at an estate purchased by Mme de Tessé on a peninsula in the lake of Ploën. Between Adrienne's aunt and La Fayette there was a remarkable community of views, whereas Mme de Montagu held political opinions diametrically opposed to her brother-in-law—which had not prevented her joining with Mme de Tessé in doing everything possible to get him released. Adrienne's sister, as soon as she knew that the prisoners of Olmütz had arrived, came to meet them, crossing the lake in a little skiff piloted by the aged *comte* de Mun. The joy of Anne and Adrienne at their reunion may be imagined.

At Witmold La Fayette, still accompanied by de Puzy and Latour-Maubourg, saw Théodore de Lameth. On October 11 he wrote to a friend, "Holstein is beyond the range of the Coalition powers; there are, in the towns, and notably among teachers, men of letters etc. many friends of liberty who, consequently, wish us well." Under this favourable impression the General, after five weeks spent with Adrienne's amiable and intelligent aunt, rented the château of Lemkuhlen, in the same neighbourhood, and there set up his winter quarters.

During the winter the La Fayettees had the joy of reunion with their son George, now nineteen years old, whom Washington had welcomed at Mount Vernon and whose education he had supervised. After his term as President of the United States La Fayette's "*père posthume*", whose opposition to demagogic ideas had damaged his popularity, had retired into private life. He set about improving his estate, an example which Gilbert was later tempted to follow. Another source of satisfaction to the General was the marriage of his eldest daughter, Anastasie, to Charles de Latour-Maubourg, younger brother of La Fayette's Olmütz fellow-prisoner. The young man was captivated by the girl, sought and obtained her hand despite the smallness of his present means. Gilbert and his wife attached no importance to

the matter of money, but M. de Mun and Mme de Tessé had begun by being very indignant at the poverty of the match, maintaining that "there had been nothing like it since Adam and Eve". The wedding, however, took place in Mme de Tessé's house, her objections having given way to the tenderest solicitude for the young people. Adrienne, still an invalid as a consequence of her privations in prison, had to be carried into the room where the ceremony was performed. Ten days later her sister, Mme de Montagu, gave birth to a daughter, Stéphanie. Happy family events, these, in the midst of the material preoccupations of exile.

After so long as a forced semi-recluse, Gilbert enjoyed the pleasures of society. At the end of the winter of 1797 the *marquise de Simiane*, by the patronage of a former Jacobin, obtained a passport to visit her friend Mme de Tessé at Witmold. Another visitor was Théodore de Lameth, accompanied by his aides-de-camp.

Having suffered for his faith, the General still had no thoughts but such as concerned the ensuring of the reign of liberty in France and the whole world. In the *Life* of the *marquise de Montagu*, for example, we find, "For him we were still at the stage of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the dawn of the Revolution. All the rest was, no doubt, a great misfortune but not, in his opinion, any more discouraging than are accounts of shipwreck to good sailors." It is, then, hardly surprising if their political conversations and discussions were sometimes vehement, even though the ex-prisoner of Olmütz showed "no rancour, no hatred either against persons or parties, but not the slightest change in his opinions".

In collaboration with Puzy he was planning to write a book for the dissemination and strengthening of his doctrines. "We must", he explained in a letter dated December 25, 1797, "achieve the double object of bringing our country to complete its revolution virtuously and solidly, while helping to make the revolution easier and more reasonably achieved in the rest of Europe." It was an immense programme and to it he devoted the remainder of his life. What would he have thought of a certain criticism which we owe to an unexpected collaboration between Montesquieu and Maurice Donnay: "Democracy is

viable only if it be founded on virtue—which is the most damning indictment that regime has ever had to answer!”¹

It does seem, however, that for a while events did not fail entirely to make some impression on his mind. In July 1798, writing to Masclet, he said, “Do not think me such a simpleton that I imagine everything is to be achieved and saved, everyone convinced by no more than the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. No; I believe that an active police force, a vigorous government, severe and severely applied laws, are necessary; but if we want to found a Republic the laws must be just and their application imperturbable.” And there, of course, lay the difficulty.

Mme de La Fayette’s enlightened piety and elevated feelings filled all their entourage with admiration. Her sister, Mme de Montagu, had succeeded in converting Goethe’s friend, the *comte* von Stolberg, to Catholicism. But the necessity of returning to France on family business forced Adrienne, although she was still convalescent, to leave her husband. Not being on the list of proscribed persons, she was able, accompanied by her daughter Virginie, to go to Paris—where, however, she remained only a few days—and then to her aunt’s at Chavaniac.

Gilbert was making an effort to persuade the Directory to amnesty those officers whose only crime had been that of obeying his orders. It was Adrienne who delivered his letter to the Director, Larevellière-Lépeaux, but it did not succeed. She then rejoined her husband at Vianen, near Utrecht, where, in 1799, the General installed himself with George, who enlisted in the Dutch army. Her two sisters soon joined her there, Mme de Grammont hastening from France to be with her elder sisters. The financial situation of the exiles had become critical, Mme d’Ayen’s estate not yet having been distributed to the heirs, Mme de Montagu being still proscribed and therefore under a ban of “civic death”. For a month, from Holy Week, the three sisters remained in the General’s house, but he was now no better

¹ Not a literal translation but I think it gives the true sense of “La démocratique n’est viable que si elle repose sur la vertu—ce qui est le réquisitoire le plus terrible qu’on ait prononcé contre ce régime!”—*Trans.*

off himself. There were usually fifteen or sixteen persons who sat down to eat at his table, but his guests began to fare very meagrely. Nevertheless the joy of being in so peaceful and tranquil a country was greater than the distress of straitened circumstances.

La Fayette still maintained his correspondence, especially with Washington, never ceasing to give close attention to public events and to expound his political ideas. He was on excellent terms with General van Ryssel, at one time *Maréchal de camp* to Louis XVI and whose daughter was to marry Latour-Maubourg's son. From a letter he wrote to Adrienne during her absence we learn that he had a visit from Rouget de Lisle (the General spells it de Lille), at that time General Daëndels' aide-de-camp. Gilbert had a long talk with the man who had caused the air of France to ring with appeals for "*la Liberté chérie*", speaking in particular of his uncle Bailly, guillotined in the year II of that same ruthless Liberty.

Meanwhile war was drawing nearer. England had contrived to bring Austria, Russia, the Italian princes and Turkey into the fight; the Coalition was recovering the initiative. A British army landed at Helder. Frightened, Adrienne, back in Paris in an effort to hasten the business of the family legacies, went to see Sieyès and told him that in the event of Holland being invaded the General would seek asylum on French territory. Sieyès advised her that he would do better to go to Prussia, which had not taken up arms again. To which Adrienne replied that her husband had already once been imprisoned by the King of Prussia, and, if he must be shut up, preferred a prison in his own country; but that he hoped for better things from his fatherland.

While, in France, the situation remained disturbed, Brune's victory in Holland and the Duke of York's surrender on October 18, 1799, removed the danger. Meanwhile Bonaparte had landed at Fréjus (October 9), radiant with oriental splendour as the conqueror of Egypt. Welcomed as a liberator, he arrived in Paris on the 16th. In a letter to César de Latour-Maubourg, La Fayette called him "the Convention party's policeman"; on November 9 (18 brumaire) the policeman's grenadiers dispersed

the Five Hundred and, as First Consul, he was vested with the executive authority.

Acting on Adrienne's advice, and recognizing that an irresistible tide was sweeping Bonaparte to the mastery of France, La Fayette had already (October 30) written to him: "Citizen general, love of liberty and the fatherland would have sufficed to fill me with joy and hope upon your arrival. To that thirst for the public good is added a keen and profound feeling for my liberator. The welcome you gave to those ladies who had been prisoners at Olmütz¹ has been recounted to me by her whose life I owe to you: I rejoice in all my obligations to you, Citizen general, and in the happy conviction that to cherish your glory and wish for your success is as much an act of good citizenship as it is a motion of attachment and gratitude."

Adrienne had, in fact, hastened to see Bonaparte immediately upon his return, to thank him for having put an end to their imprisonment at Olmütz, and she had been well received. She was asking for no favours: she knew her husband's pride and she considered that he should return to France "with no more authorization than the liberal intentions which were then being proclaimed". Her husband wrote to her, "Here, in accordance with your advice, is my letter to Bonaparte, short, and perhaps a shade dry— Ill-disposed people see me as opposed to him in the future; they are right, should he try to oppress liberty; but if he has a mind to serve liberty, I shall suit him in every way, for I do not believe him so foolish as to want to be no better than a despot— The needs of my soul are the same for the ending of the Revolution to humanity's advantage and re-establishing the doctrine of liberty—" (*This passage to show that Gilbert still believed he could take an effective part in the conduct of the country*). "But I am more than ever disgusted at the idea of taking root in public business; I shall take a hand only to lend a hand, as they say, and nothing, I swear to you, will persuade me to renounce the plan of the retirement in which we are to spend the rest of our life in tranquillity."

Illusions, no doubt. To be lending a hand a man must be near enough to the work going forward. Adrienne, as a wise Frenchwoman, was very doubtful indeed as to the likelihood of so

¹ See below.—*Trans.*

energetic a driver of the state coach being disposed to harness with his team a racing blood horse so quick of temper and impatient of the bit. However, La Fayette provided with a passport, returned to Paris, and wrote to the two provisional Consuls, Bonaparte and Sieyès, to announce his arrival.

Chapter 20



LA FAYETTE AND BONAPARTE THE IRREDUCIBLE CHAMPION OF LIBERTY

As soon as he arrived in Paris La Fayette sought the hospitality of his friend Adrien de Mun and on the same day he wrote to Bonaparte: "Citizen Consul, I came to the conclusion that the continuance of my proscription suited neither the government nor myself. Before leaving for the distant country place where I am going to rejoin my family, and even before calling upon my friends here, I write to you without a moment's delay, not that I am in any doubt of being where I belong wheresoever the Republic be based upon foundations worthy of itself, but that my duty and my feelings both urge me to express my gratitude to you, in person."

Clarke undertook to carry the letter to the Consul, who, according to Gilbert's *Mémoires*, was "very angry". Did not the terms of his letter make it clear that this "proscript", this outlaw, was returning home on his own authority, whereas his name had not yet been removed from the proscription lists of *émigrés*? Besides, it is at least possible that the officer who, on 13 vendémiaire, had decimated the royalist sections of the National Guard may have feared lest their former commander regain his ascendancy over them, an ascendancy which might be troublesome to his own authority.

Worried by Bonaparte's reaction, Talleyrand and Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély did all in their power to persuade La Fayette to return, provisionally, to Holland. The General would not budge. "It would be a joke indeed," he said, "if I were arrested this evening by the Paris National Guard and tomorrow thrown into the Temple by the restorer of the principles of 1789!"

Since nobody else dared pursue the matter with the Consul, it was again Mme de La Fayette who confronted the master of the hour. She was graciously received: "I am charmed, Madame, to make your acquaintance; you are very intelligent but you do not understand business." Suspicious, he added, "M. de La Fayette's arrival hinders my advance towards the establishment of my principles and forces me to sail close to the wind. I conjure him, therefore, to avoid any kind of ostentation¹ and for that I am relying on his patriotism." Adrienne replied that such had always been the General's intention. And Gilbert, feeling himself bound by Bonaparte's wishes, arranged to set off for the Brie.

Conscientiously law-abiding, the General, in conformity with the police order of March 1, 1800, presented, at the Ministry of Police, the attestation required of former members of the Constituent Assembly, "that they had voted for the establishment of equality and the suppression of the nobility". And he asked Fouché for the same deposition for his officers.

The Consul Lebrun took La Fayette and Latour-Maubourg to the Tuileries to present them to Bonaparte. "The First Consul came towards us with a most amiable bearing," Gilbert said. "I was put in mind of the first greeting I had formerly received from Frederick the Great." And when the friend of Washington expressed thanks on behalf of Puzy, then in the United States, Bonaparte replied, "He will come back, and so will Dupont de Nemours; one always returns to the waters of the Seine." But all this was nevertheless the beginning of a system of silence towards his possible rival. When, on February 1, 1800, Fontanes, who was to be Grand Master of the University under the Empire, delivered a panegyric on Washington at the Invalides, the author of the brumaire *coup d'état* forbade him to mention La Fayette's name and showed the keenest displeasure upon seeing George de La Fayette at the ceremony, although the young man was the former President's godson.

The former National Guard commander was now obliged to give all his attention to the necessity for rebuilding his fortune, seriously damaged by the confiscations. Mme d'Ayen's estate had still not been dealt with. In the summer of 1800 he was

¹ "*éviter tout éclat*".

to visit Chavaniac to greet his aunt, who had repurchased the estate. He admired the restoration of the château, but he had made up his mind to settle in the Seine-et-Marne *Département*. The settlement of the estate, which was to be made at last in April of 1801, gave La Grange to Mme de La Fayette and the estate of Fontenay-en-Brie to Mme de Montagu.

La Fayette saw Bonaparte again at Mortefontaine, where Joseph had invited him for a grand banquet and celebration lasting two days, on the occasion of the signature of the Treaty of Commerce (September 30) with the United States. They had some conversation against the tranquillizing background of Valois' great lakes and lovely woods.

Bonaparte: You must have found the French grown much cooler towards liberty.

La Fayette: Yes, but they are in a condition to receive it.

Bonaparte: They're thoroughly disgusted with it, your Parisians, for example! Oh, the shopkeepers want no more to do with it!

La Fayette: I am not unaware of the effect of the crimes and follies which profaned the name of liberty! But I repeat, the French are perhaps more than ever in a condition to receive it; it is up to you to give it to them, it is from you they expect it.

At least he succeeded in getting Mme de Tessé's name removed from the proscription lists of *émigrés*.

There were ideas, in high places, of winning the General's support for the new régime. Cabanis had offered him a Senator's seat, and Talleyrand renewed the proposal. Talleyrand wanted, moreover, to send him to the United States as ambassador, which would, at the same time, have been an excellent method of putting him at a distance. Washington's former comrade-in-arms refused the offer: he was, he said, too American to represent a foreign country in the United States.

Besides, the La Grange estate required all his attention. Between the ancient towers which flank the château, blocks of seventeenth-century buildings include suites of rooms furnished in perfect taste, in which the present owners, descendants of Mme de Lasteyrie, still live and where one almost expects to see the Hero of Two Worlds himself, so perfectly does the setting call him and his times to mind.

He had had the park designed by his friend Hubert Robert, but, unlike Lamartine, he was very successful in farming his agricultural land. Tired out by his long captivity, he became attached to the quiet country life, his beloved Adrienne at his side, seeing her health, more seriously impaired even than his own, improve with good air and the tranquillity she preferred.

Their son George had been commissioned as a sub-lieutenant and posted by Bonaparte to a regiment of *Hussards*. George's father had frequent interviews with the First Consul and, being ten years his senior, was a good deal too much inclined to play mentor. Talleyrand still persisting in his idea that Gilbert should take a seat in the Senate, the General answered, laughing, "I should be obliged, the day after taking my seat, to denounce the government and its chief." This disapproving, if not hostile, attitude annoyed Bonaparte, who sent General Dumas to La Fayette: "Nobody likes to be taken for a tyrant. General de La Fayette appears to be implying that such I am." To which Gilbert sent this answer: "The silence of my retirement is the maximum of my deference; had Bonaparte tried to serve liberty, I should have been devoted to him."

The attempt at assassination with an infernal machine, which occurred on 3 nivôse year IX (December 24, 1800) gave Gilbert another chance to call on Bonaparte, and he was so moved by the manner in which the First Consul talked of "the glory of France", that he took his hand. Following this visit their meetings became more numerous. In his *Mes rapports avec le Premier Consul* (addressed to General van Ryssel), Gilbert recalls interviews which lasted sometimes two to three hours. His own specific purpose was the removal of names from the proscription lists against *émigrés*, but he adds, "We talked of everything with mutual freedom."

He begged the Consul to have his Cayenne property restored to him. The government wanted to indemnify him in state bonds or paper money. As he showed reluctance to accept these, notaries were summoned to settle the business. But an altercation arose between Gilbert and the minister concerned, the apostle of liberty being unwilling to sign a paper containing a clause which implied that negroes were being treated as chattels.

Bonaparte had the offending words struck out, and La Fayette recovered his clove trees.¹

Even George's future was discussed; he had been twice wounded at the Mincio, on which Bonaparte's comment was, "Fine—a charming beginning for the young man, I rejoice with you."

Love of their trade—courage—drew the two men together. Speaking of the aristocracy, the First Consul said, "Only men of that class know how to serve well." And they felt united in being the objects of the same animosities: "I am greatly hated," Bonaparte admitted, "and so are others, by these princes and their followers, but all this is nothing beside their hatred for you."

And, making a last effort—as vain as all the rest, "Do you feel that you are still too busy to be a Senator?"

La Fayette: It's not that, but I believe that retirement would suit me best.

And retirement was granted, at the maximum rate for that time: six thousand francs a year.²

On 16 thermidor year X (August 4, 1802) Bonaparte, already named Consul for ten years, was elected Consul for life by 3,568,885 votes: there were 3,577,259 voters.

If we are to believe La Fayette—in the account of their talk at Mortefontaine—we might suppose that it was he who had given Bonaparte this idea: "I then spoke to him of the idea that had occurred to several members of the federal convention of having, in America, a life presidency; I saw his eyes light up. . . . I added that, given national representation and suitable checks, this idea might be good in France. . . . He kept his eyes on me with an air of attention."

Nevertheless the proprietor of La Grange cast a negative vote and made matters worse by writing a comment in the communal register: "I cannot vote for such a magistracy until public liberty be adequately guaranteed: then I will give my vote to Napoleon Bonaparte." On May 20 he had written Bonaparte a

¹ Presumably the plantations were of spices.—*Trans.*

² 6,000 gold francs, say £300: its present day purchasing power would perhaps be of the order of £2,000.—*Trans.*

letter in similar terms, a letter which, needless to say, remained unanswered! Carnot was also among the eight thousand who voted against the life consulship.

1802 was the year of the Peace of Amiens, spent by the gentleman farmer at La Grange in enjoying the peace of his fields. In the month of May he bought twelve ewes—by 1811 his flock numbered 720. In June he had the happiness of marrying his son George to the daughter of one of his former colleagues in the Constituent Assembly, Destutt de Tracy.

Thanks to the treaty the English were able to visit France again and La Fayette entertained Charles James Fox and his wife, and General Fitzpatrick, thus paying off the debt of gratitude he owed them for their courage in the face of Pitt's opposition at the time of their friend's captivity.

On January 23, 1803, the General was coming out of the Ministry of Marine when he slipped on the ice and broke his femur. He suffered cruel pain, and the accident delayed the wedding of his daughter Virginie, who, during a visit to Chavaniac, had there met Louis, *marquis de Lasteyrie du Saillant*, and subsequently become betrothed to him. The wedding did not take place until April 20, after which the whole family went down to Aulnay, to Mme de Tessé, for a rest. That amiable lady provided La Fayette with a wheel-chair which enabled him to take the air and gentle exercise among the flower-beds of her garden.

While he was still in Paris, Moreau and Bernadotte had both called to ask after the invalid, but there was no more question of meetings with Bonaparte. However, at Joseph's invitation Gilbert was offered the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour, which he refused, for it now suited him to be a nobody. In the same spirit he refused Jefferson's offer of a vast land concession "wherever he wished," 11,500 acres to which he was, by virtue of his rank, entitled out of land set aside for the soldiers; in addition he was to be made Governor of Louisiana. But—"Liberty", the General tells us, "no longer needed me; my presence in Europe might become useful, the danger it entailed made it honourable."¹

The proclamation of the Empire widened the gulf which

¹ His word is "*décent*".—*Trans.*

separated him from Napoleon. Great was the disappointment and mortification of the friends of liberty.¹ In the *Life* of Mme de Montagu are a few lines which give a clear idea of what, morally, La Fayette's country seat had become: "In Mazarin's time La Grange had been one of the strongest places of the Fronde. Turenne could not take it, although he bombarded it with a few cannon balls whose marks have not been effaced. One might have thought, in 1806, that the Fronde garrison was still in possession, not an armed Fronde, but a Fronde of wit and raillery. . . ." Mme de Staël had come there to correct the proofs of one of her books.

The vendetta, as conducted by the crowned Corsican, was more paltry, indeed shabby: he struck at Gilbert through George and Louis de Lasteyrie by crossing their names off the promotion lists, despite their services, finally reducing them to leaving the army.

Mme de La Fayette, in spite of the fact that her health never recovered from its failure during her imprisonment, busied herself in good works, such as the Courpalais school, which she had founded. In October 1807 she was obliged to go to Aulnay in order to rest, but her condition became worse, she had to be taken to her aunt de Tessé's town house in Paris, and there, after a long ordeal of sickness, she gave up her valiant soul to God on Christmas Eve. A long letter from her husband to Latour-Maubourg, in January 1808, written, he says, "from the bottom of the abyss into which I have been cast", reveals the profound grief with which he was stricken upon losing his wife. He had "during thirty-four years experienced the magnificent qualities which charmed, embellished and honoured her life".

She had made him understand what her faith was:

"You are not a Christian!" And, when he did not reply, "Ah, I know, you're a Fayettist!"

"You think me very vain, I see, but are you not something of a Fayettist yourself?"

¹ Beethoven had composed a symphony the first MS. of which was entitled *Bonaparte*. Hearing of the Imperial coronation he tore up the dedication, crying, "He was, then, no more than an ordinary man!" The title then became "Heroic Symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man".

"Yes, indeed! I feel that I could give my life for that sect."

And indeed, there never was a more loving, more devoted and more amiable wife. "In order", La Fayette wrote, "to make her religion more to my taste, she called it 'the sovereign liberty'."

Mme de La Fayette was buried in the Picpus cemetery, near to the enclosure where more than thirteen hundred victims had been buried after being guillotined in the *place du Trône* before 9 thermidor. She and her sister had endowed a charity—*l'oeuvre du Picpus*—and she had bought the land next to the common grave where her grandmother, her mother and her sister had been thrown, with the help of a subscription among the families of victims of the Terror, among them many of humble condition as well as great names in the nobility, and the poets André de Chénier and Roucher. The old convent, occupied by the Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration, and the chapel, were restored by Adrienne and the subscribers. On several occasions the Imperial government threatened to close the church and the adjoining field of martyrs.

La Fayette went sadly back to La Grange. There, until 1814, he was to live retired, intransigent: later, writing of himself at this time, he said: "It was a great deal—I am not afraid to say it—to have stood erect during those twelve years, while all about me, at home and abroad, others prostrated themselves." He maintained a continuous correspondence with those who had remained faithful to him.

The improvement and exploitation of his estate distracted his mind from his cares. He sent the *abbé* Tessier a memorandum on his sheepfolds. To Jefferson, at Monticello in Virginia, he sent sheep-dogs, doubtless of the briards breed. Occasionally he went to Chavaniac to visit the aunt whom he called his second mother and who lived until 1811, dying at ninety-four years of age. La Grange is still adorned by a charming portrait of her. On February 1, 1814, he suffered the grief of losing his "maternal friend of more than forty years," Mme de Tessé, whose devotion to Gilbert and Adrienne had, indeed, been flawless.

The National Guard, dissolved after Vendémiaire, and re-established under the Directory, played no part whatever under

the Consulate. It did not come to life again until the end of the Empire, in the hour of danger. In 1812, during a discussion in the Council of State, Napoleon spoke of its former commander: "Everyone in France is amended.¹ I am thinking of the only man who is not, La Fayette. He has never yielded an inch: You see him as calm, passive; well, *I* tell you he is perfectly ready to start all over again." On November 17, 1813, an imperial decree called up 190,000 National Guards to take over home garrison duties, and thenceforth Napoleon was most often to be seen wearing National Guard uniform, which, indeed, he was even to wear on St. Helena.

1814. Despite the Emperor's military genius the French armies fell back across the Rhine and the great wave of allied soldiers poured after them. The king-maker's turn had come to experience the fate of those—

Trônes que l'on élève et qu'on brise en courant.

Victor Hugo

On March 31 Paris capitulated. On April 3 the Senate declared Napoleon deposed. On the 6th he abdicated in favour of his son. On the 12th the *comte* d'Artois entered the capital, preceding Louis XVIII, who did not arrive until May 3—in a carriage drawn by six white horses—"Surrounded by marshals of the Empire and high officers of the army", as Mme de Montagu, who watched the scene with great joy, tells us. La Fayette notes in his *Mémoires* that the return of the Bourbons was received "with general goodwill".

Gilbert was actually in Paris with his son, who, since Tilsit, had been out of the army, and with his son-in-law Lasteyrie. He had been called to Paris as a result of the death of M. and Mme de Tessé.²

Wishing to resume service in the National Guard, he approached M. de Ternaux, chief of the 3rd Legion, for the command of a battalion; he even made a similar move towards the regular army, but was not successful. He had quarrelled

¹ "*corrigé*."—*Trans.*

² Details contained in a chapter of La Fayette's *Mémoires*, written in 1817 and 1818 and which he did not correct, and which give an account of his attitude in 1814-15.

with Napoleon, but now he was guided only by his desire to serve his country. Was it a reawakening of his royalist traditions? Or restless memories of his youth? His own comment on his feelings is: "I should have scrupled to recall the Bourbons myself, nevertheless, such is the strength of early impressions that it was with pleasure I saw them return, that the sight of the *comte d'Artois* in the street moved me greatly, and that, forgiving the wrongs they had done, even to our country, I wished and hoped with all my heart that liberty might associate itself with the reign of Louis XVI's brothers and daughter."¹

On April 15 he wrote to *Monsieur* that he was happy to see his return become a signal and a pledge of the people's happiness and liberty. *Monsieur* confined himself to sending his compliments by an aide-de-camp, Alexis de Noailles, the General's nephew. But he was very well received by Louis XVIII and his brother when, having put on his uniform (and resigned himself to the white cockade in his hat only after some fruitless pleas for the retention of "our cockade"), he presented himself at the first royal audience. His sacrifice of the cockade was a painful one and it was made in the hope of being the better able to defend liberty. He went to see the *duc d'Orléans* and, in his own words, recognized in him "the only Bourbon compatible with a real Constitution".

La Fayette paid a visit to the King of Prussia, who had his son-in-law, Maubourg, a prisoner-of-war, released at once. He left the audience very flattered by his reception and recorded that the King had "expressed himself in a very obliging fashion on the fact that the Bourbons had only been able to make their return in *my* uniform, that of the National Guard".

That livery was, indeed, in fashion. On August 7, at the Champ-de-Mars, Louis XVIII was present at the blessing and presentation of new National Guard colours; but La Fayette was given no command.

At his faithful friend Mme de Staël's the General met the tsar Alexander and seems to have been greatly taken with him. "He was polite, amiable and above all liberal." Needless to say, La Fayette held him long in conversation about liberty. The autocrat, who had been educated by the Genevan ideologist

¹ *Mémoires*, Vol. V., p. 356.

La Harpe, complained of "the servility of our [the French] press", adding a forecast which our own time has singularly failed to vindicate—"We shall do better in Russia."¹

The conversation was carried on in a window bay: "The Bourbons amended?" the tsar said. "They have not mended their ideas and they are incorrigible. There is only one of them, the *duc d'Orléans*, who has liberal ideas; as for the rest, expect nothing from them." And in fact Louis XVIII, by dating the Charter as in the nineteenth year of his reign, was giving untimely encouragement to political reaction. The conduct of his entourage did him the greatest possible harm, and the disappointment felt by the nation began to change the favourable state of mind in which the King's return had been welcomed. La Fayette soon found that he was a particular object of *émigré* and *ultra*-hostility, for they looked upon him as one of those principally responsible for the Revolution. Once again he withdrew to La Grange, while in New York, during September, Gouverneur Morris, former United States Ambassador to France, was celebrating the return of the Bourbons, which was putting an end to "the long agony", was calling Louis XVI "protector of human rights", and was congratulating himself on the fact that his country "need not blush for any friendly relationship with the assassins [of those rights]".

Napoleon, after his escape from Elba, landed at Golfe Juan on March 1, 1815; on the 20th Louis XVIII left the Tuileries, and the Emperor arrived in the palace at nine the same evening. "He again became the army's man, and even the Revolution's man, to the misfortune of France," the General noted.²

"I was not overthrown by the allied sovereigns," Napoleon had said at Fontainebleau, "but by liberal ideas." Accordingly, on his return from Elba, he set himself up as anxious to "base liberty on a Constitution in conformity with the people's will and interest". These were the terms he was to employ in his speech at the Champ-de-Mai. La Fayette, so often disappointed, was suspicious. He had come up to Paris to see whether he could "take advantage of the crisis for the good cause"; but despite

¹ *Mémoires*, Vol. V, p. 311.

² *Mémoires*, Vol. V, p. 356.

Joseph Bonaparte's pleas, he refused to espouse the Emperor's cause, and returned to the country.

L'Acte additionnel aux constitutions de l'Empire—dated April 22—was, according to the Bonapartist historian Norvins, a disappointment. In the plebiscite which ratified it there were numerous abstentions. On May 8 La Fayette was elected president of the Seine-et-Marne electoral college, and on the 10th he was elected deputy with 56 votes out of 79 voters. He had voted *Yes* in the plebiscite and recorded his reasons in the communal register—"The people's rights have been recognized"; but he added a number of reservations. However, he was back in active politics. During their exile Mme de Montagu had once exclaimed, "Poor Gilbert, God keep him from ever being in the arena again!" Her prayer had unhappily been in vain.

Despite Napoleon's efforts to appease the allied princes they were resolved, in accordance with the Declaration of the Congress of Vienna, to destroy him. "Neither peace nor truce with Napoleon." The war recommenced.

The opening of the Chamber of Representatives took place on June 7, under the presidency of Lanjuinais; La Fayette, elected one of the Vice-Presidents by 257 votes, was, on that occasion, presented to Napoleon and, when relating his interview, gave his impressions: "You will be pleased with his speech; I was not with his bearing, which seemed to me that of an old despot irritated by the part his position is forcing him to play." The words exchanged by the two adversaries were insignificant and few.

On the night of the 11th Napoleon left to take over command of the army, following the Guard, which had left Paris on the 8th. He hoped to steal a march on his enemies, whose preparations were not yet complete. On June 18 the disaster of Waterloo at last broke the Eagle's wings. The *morne plaine*—the dismal plain hymned by Victor Hugo in *Les Châtiments*,

Vit fuir ceux devant qui l'univers avait fui

Saw fleeing those before whom the world had fled

It was said that a short time before, George, Grouchy's aide-de-camp, had saved his general's life. Now, had Grouchy for whom, it will be remembered, Napoleon had waited in

vain, been replaced in his command by a more active general, the outcome of the battle might have been different. George's contribution to his chief's downfall was unwitting: Gilbert's, which was to come, was deliberate.

On the night of June 20 Napoleon reached Paris in a state of exhaustion. La Fayette learned that Fouché had heard of a discussion at the palace in which it had been proposed to restore the dictatorship and dissolve Parliament. Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angély confirmed the information. The following day, in the Chamber of Representatives, La Fayette leaped to the tribune and delivered a violent speech.

"Now is the moment to rally round the old tricolour standard—the standard of liberty, equality and public order." And, making the most of his standing as the veteran of the sacred cause of the fatherland, he put through two motions:

Article 1: The Chamber of Representatives declares that the independence of the nation is threatened.

Article 2: The Chamber declares itself in permanent session. Any attempt to dissolve it is a crime of High Treason.

Norvins recounts Napoleon's reaction: "I thought I should have got rid of those people before I left. It's done now—they'll be the end of France." For him, at all events, the game was up. On the 22nd La Fayette instructed the Minister of State to tell the Emperor he had one hour in which to abdicate. Joseph and Lucien urged their brother to give up the crown, but in vain. In the Chamber Lucien adjured the deputies to remain faithful to Napoleon. It was La Fayette who answered him:

"It is because we did follow him that we now have to mourn the deaths of three million Frenchmen . . . I see only one man standing between us and peace; we have done enough for him. Our duty is to save the fatherland."

The Emperor abdicated, but in favour of his son. The *bureau* of the Chamber was instructed to inform Napoleon that the French people accepted his abdication, taking no account of the *roi de Rome*. La Fayette was a member of the delegation. He records that Napoleon received it with calm and great dignity, that his bearing was perfect, as was his speech; he adds: "You may well believe that I did not put myself forward!"

Triumphant, but courteous as always, Gilbert busied himself

in arranging for the vanquished Emperor to leave for the United States, whither he himself had thought of retiring in 1792. But on July 13 Napoleon, boarding H.M.S. *Bellerophon*, gave himself up to the English. Speaking of La Fayette, he had once said, "He's a simpleton"—a description which was also applied to Gilbert by Chateaubriand, by Frénilly, and—by the *duc d'Ayen*, who had been known more than once to allude to his son-in-law's silly simplicity. The term *niais*¹ is, in falconry, applied to a bird taken *au nid*, in the nest. The General and the Emperor were both captured when leaving their country, each nursing illusions as to the welcome their enemies would extend to them. From which it may be concluded, by and large and keeping our sense of proportion, that the term was no more applicable to the one than to the other.

Immediately after the abdication a provisional government was formed by Parliament, in which it seems that Fouché, *duc d'Otranto*, played the preponderant rôle. Fouché hastened to have Masséna, prince of Essling, appointed commander of the National Guard, although the post would seem to have been more suitable for the guard's former general. But La Fayette had been got out of Paris, having been designated, with Boissy d'Anglas, Andréossy, and some others to form a delegation which was to try and halt the allies by entering into negotiations. The delegation left for Haguenau on the 27th, but all the efforts of the plenipotentiaries came to nothing in the face of the allied sovereigns' determination to continue the war. La Fayette reported that Lord Stewart, Castlereagh's half-brother, told him personally, "I must warn you, Monsieur, that no peace with the allied powers is possible unless you hand over Bonaparte to us." To which Gilbert replied, "I am astonished indeed that, in order to suggest such a cowardly act to the French people, you should choose to address yourself to one of the prisoners of Olmütz." He had, as Sainte-Beuve observes, "a feeling for the appropriate dramatic reply" in all his historic exchanges.

Upon his return to Paris the General saw the white flag floating above the Tuileries. The Allies had entered the city on July 6 and were followed, two days later, by Louis XVIII. "I should like", Gilbert wrote, "to return to La Grange with

¹ "Simpleton" is the nearest English.—*Trans.*

my children, but I cannot bear the idea of doing the honours to a German, English or Russian garrison. So I stay in my little room and cannot leave it without undergoing the most painful feelings." Meanwhile his château was occupied by the Prussians and suffered little damage, the occupying troops not having attained to that mastery in matters of looting and pillage of which they have given proof in our own times.

On December 15, 1815, having at last returned to his estate, he wrote to Lord Holland and recalled the words that Fox had spoken in 1802: "If our two countries can have liberal governments at the same time, the cause of the human race is won."

And if, in fact, there have been conflicts between France and England since 1815, none of them were bloody, and the two peoples have been united on many a field of battle in defence of that liberty which was dear to La Fayette.

Chapter 21



THE PHASE OF ABORTIVE CONSPIRACIES

Rid of Napoleon, Louis XVIII was not rid of La Fayette. Although the King and the General had very different principles, they were in agreement about the treatment of former followers of Napoleon who had rallied to him during the Hundred Days, despite their oath to the restored monarchy. However, under a parliamentary system the king reigns but does not govern: he may possess the prerogative of mercy, but there will be those about him who will prevent him from using it.

The Chamber, called the *Introuvable*,¹ has long been disgraced by history. It was reproached with being more royalist than the King, and that is exactly what it was. Elected under a system of restricted suffrage, it nevertheless represented the feeling of the country, what we now call the climate of opinion: it was a country which had suffered defeat and was afraid, and fear, a bad counsellor, engenders vengeance and reprisals. Louis XVIII's mistake was in failing to resist that pressure, failing to make generous use of measures of clemency, especially towards such men as Ney and La Bédoyère. Although the *duc de Richelieu*, a statesman of lofty mind and opinions, confined the prosecutions to the principal culprits, even so there was too much harshness. The opposition was given a convenient handle against the white flag of the Bourbons, which was thus made to stand for vengeance rather than justice; and against a monarchy which had come back "in the Allies' baggage-train," and whose advisers, former *émigrés*, had "learned nothing and forgotten nothing".

The opposition's most troublesome element was, for a time,

¹ *Introuvable*: Literally "unfindable", implying "too good (or bad) to be true".

La Fayette, although he had once again withdrawn to La Grange. And he possessed a formidable weapon against the King: the condemnation of the *marquis de Favras* in 1790. The *dossier* contained a memorandum which Favras had handed to the investigating magistrate, Omer Talon, in which the condemned man gave irrefutable proofs of *Monsieur's*¹ involvement as a responsible party in this plot, the object of which had been to put Louis XVI under restraint, perhaps to depose him, for the benefit of his brother; and the principal means to that end was to have been the suppression of Bailly and La Fayette. Talon, who died in 1811, bequeathed his papers to his daughter Zoë, who had become *comtesse de Cayla*. Divorced, she was involved in a sentimental relationship with Louis XVIII, ill-defined, but probably platonic. Through her the King was able to lay hands on the memorandum and destroy it.

But the commander of the National Guard had been too intimately involved in the business not to remember it very exactly, and he may have had and kept notes or other documents concerning it. This knowledge, then, was a sword of Damocles hanging over the King's head; and ensured for La Fayette an immunity which was important, since he was to become the centre of the Liberal opposition, the more or less willing, or at least consenting, leader of all the plots directed against the regime of 1815.

At that time La Grange was by no means the hermitage of which its proprietor had formerly dreamed. It was the domain of a *gens* in the manner of ancient Rome. All the General's descendants were there gathered together—his son, daughter-in-law, daughters, sons-in-law and eleven grandchildren. There was a constant succession of visitors, among them the painter Ary Scheffer, who did a portrait of Gilbert, numerous foreigners, especially Americans, including, in 1816, Ticknor, who became a distinguished historian, and who had been recommended to Mme de Staël by Jefferson.² Mme de Staël herself was not to be seen there again, she died in 1817, but her son-in-law, the

¹ As Louis XVIII then was.—*Trans.*

² Among the visitors was Mrs Trollope, subsequently author of *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, of which Gilbert would hardly have approved, and, of course, mother of Anthony.—*Trans.*

duc Victor de Broglie, came to stay at La Grange with his wife. "If he was to be loved," said de Broglie, "M. de La Fayette had to be loved for himself alone, which, however, was easy since there was no advantage in being one of his real friends. He made no distinctions excepting between those who repeated, and those who did not repeat, whatever he said himself. He was a prince surrounded by people who flattered him and robbed him. All that splendid fortune was frittered away through the hands of adventurers and spies."

De Broglie exaggerates a little and he forgets an act of high charity—Gilbert's handing over of his store of provisions to the poor of the district during the agricultural crisis of 1817.

The spirit of La Grange was, of course, hostile to the Restoration, which was there called Royalist Jacobinism. Liberty, especially as La Fayette conceived of it, no longer existed. Instead of the Sovereign as arbitrator between political parties, as dreamed of by the Constitutionals of 1791, it was the arbitrator himself who ruled, and the notorious White Terror which, from the beginning, marred the valuable work of the Restoration in the administrative and financial fields by rousing, in far too many people, an ineradicable hatred.

The *Acte additionnel* had done something to bring Bonapartists and Republicans together: it is known, for example, that Carnot had offered his services to Napoleon. A common hostility to the royal government tended to unite the two parties under the three colours; the white flag was no longer, for them, the oriflamme of Saint-Denis, but the standard of the *émigrés*. Paradox was becoming more and more firmly established in French history; La Fayette, Napoleon's implacable adversary, was becoming deeply involved in Bonapartist plots, and led the fight against the parliamentary monarchy of the Charter, although it was nearer to his ideal than the Imperial system.

Louis XVIII was even more affected by La Fayette's success in the elections than by that of the *abbé* Grégoire, although that success was only relative: of 1,055 votes cast, he received 569; but, on the other hand, some account must be taken of official pressure. The successful candidate arrived in Paris at the beginning of November, 1818, accompanied by his friends Dunoyer,

Victor de Broglie, and an Italian with a romantic name, Gonfalonieri, formerly a prisoner in the Spielberg.¹

At this period—the end of 1818—the spirit which informed the Tuileries was no longer the same as in 1816. The ministers were Decazes and General Dessoles; de Serre was at the ministry of Justice. The tsar Alexander had been in Paris. His visit to the King had been short, but in the course of it he had said enough to convince the King that the most powerful monarch in Europe did not favour the *ultras*: once again the *duc de Richelieu's* Imperial friend had intervened to influence France's destiny and incline her chief of state towards a policy of appeasement.

But the liberal autocrat of the north did not realize that in Paris it is well-nigh impossible not to govern *against* something or somebody. A government only receives the support of a party at the price of carrying on the struggle against the opposing party. The left-wing press was violent. That of the centre, with Paul-Louis Courier, Béranger, Benjamin Constant, while divided, was, on the whole, hostile. Nor was Chateaubriand, with his right-wing *Le Conservateur*, less redoubtable; that flamboyant nobleman possessed, unquestioned, the art of overturning the governments whose defender he proclaimed himself to be.

La Fayette made his come-back to the tribune, on the subject of the electoral law, on March 22. It was as if 1789 had appeared to haunt 1819. Stouter, but his face still unlined, he had changed little, and even less morally, than physically. Which was why he became, without willing it, the focus of the Liberal opposition. The meetings of the society which called itself *Les Amis de la liberté de la Presse* were frequently held in his *salon*, and he was, in some measure, its spirit and law-giver. In the Chamber there was no subject upon which he did not speak, and he spoke with the utmost freedom. Following the Congress of Troppau, he compared the occupation of Naples by the powers, to the Treaty of Pilnitz and to the Coblenz manifestos . . . whereupon M. de Forbin des Issarts, supported by numerous members on the right, demanded that he be called to order.

Appearing as a witness in one of the numerous trials of people accused of conspiracy against the safety of the State, he was

¹ Austrian political prison.

treated by the presiding judge who was examining him as having fomented rebellion.

The President (of the Court): Your correspondence contains principles destructive of public order which have helped to bring about the act we are trying.

La Fayette: That is your opinion: I have another. Europe will judge between us.

Thus the Restoration was carrying on its work in an atmosphere of civil war and this was to some extent La Fayette's fault, especially since the assassination of the *duc de Berry* by Louvel, which brought about the fall of Decazes, suspect by the right, and Richelieu's adherence to the *ultras*.

In the course of his interrogation the murderer was asked what was his usual reading, and he had replied, *The Declaration of the Rights of Man*. On the grounds that Louvel had, on his own admission, been led into crime by the incitement of the Press, a censorship law was passed. The two most violent organs of the left, *La Minerve* and *La Bibliothèque historique*, ceased to appear. *Le Censeur* and *L'Indépendant* were merged. In *Le Conservateur* Chateaubriand announced that that newspaper would not survive the *duc de Berry*, nor the freedom of the Press which vanished at the same time as the murdered duke.

On March 30, the day the law was passed, five left-wing papers announced the opening of a subscription to help those who would be affected by the new measures directed against personal liberty. The subscription's managing committee included the names of La Fayette, Laffitte, Casimir Périer, d'Argenson and Kératry, all deputies. But none of them had been consulted, the publication was a breach of trust. Yet they made no disavowal and confined themselves to softening the terms of the prospectus. On the following day they were joined by Manuel, Benjamin Constant, Dupont de l'Eure and Chauvelin. A prosecution of the left-wing newspapers, initiated by the procurator Bellart was to last a long time and contribute to the general uneasiness.

There were also incipient disturbances in the provinces, at Brest, Rennes, Nantes, Châlons, and Grenoble, where the *duc d'Angoulême* was assaulted by law students, and the prefect

of police, d'Haussez, had to charge the demonstrators in person.

From the committee formed by the opposition at the time of the Press laws, a second, smaller, special committee was drawn, to resist the government not only on legal ground, but in the streets and by force: its members were La Fayette, d'Argenson, Beauséjour, Manuel, Dupont de l'Eure, de Corcelles, Mérilhou, Roy (of Grenoble) and General Tarayre. The riots against the electoral law which broke out in Paris do not seem to have been provoked, nor even directed, but only encouraged by the committee, which prepared to take advantage of them. The difference is a shade too fine, but it exactly expresses La Fayette's attitude throughout this period of agitation which was at once political and patriotic, since the attack on the Bourbons was motivated as much by the fact that their throne had been restored to them by the foreigners, as by their way of governing the country.

One of the most active centres of conspiracy at the time was the *Bazar français*, a commercial establishment situated in the *rue* Cadet, whose employees were all ex-officers of Napoleon's armies; one of the directors was the half-pay Colonel Sauzet. It was there that a military plot was hatched to start, simultaneously, in Paris and in the provinces, a number of insurrections designed to place the government at the mercy of the conspirators. But the moment that the question of a successor to Louis XVIII had to be considered, agreement vanished. General Tarayre was working for Napoleon II¹ while La Fayette, still faithful to his principles, was solely concerned to "restore to France possession of her sovereignty", leaving the electorate to decide what the future government should be. Two emissaries, Joubert and Carriol, were sent to La Grange to which the General, who seemed to be hesitating, had just returned: their mission was to persuade him to act with the conspirators. This he formally undertook to do, but began oddly by not accompanying the two messengers, although they had come to fetch him. Then somebody was indiscreet, possibly even treacherous. Marshal Marmont received a warning and

¹ The ex-King of Rome, held by the Austrians at Schönbrunn, and hero of Rostand's "*L'Aiglon*".—*Trans.*

at the meeting of the Council of Ministers on August 19, 1820, insisted that the plot should be nipped in the bud, not left to develop and then suppressed. The *duc de Richelieu* was of the same opinion. There were a few arrests and the remainder of the conspirators fled. That was only a beginning.

On September 29 a posthumous son was born to the *duc de Berry* who had been assassinated on February 13. This child, whose paternity, although certain, has been contested, ensured the future of the eldest branch of the royal family. "*Enfant du miracle*"—thus Victor Hugo, celebrating the birth in poetry—the poet was still a royalist at the time. It was an expression which the left were able to make much play with: even so, for the time being, the right had scored heavily. The 1820 elections were to some extent reminiscent of the 1815 ones: a number of *ultras* reappeared in the Chamber, and even in Paris four right-wing candidates were elected.

However, thanks to the efforts of the young *duc de Broglie* no steps were taken against the directing committee of the conspiracy, not even against La Fayette, whose participation in the *Bazar* plot seemed self-evident (was his Favras talisman still operating effectively?), nor against Colonel Fabvier who had played the leading part.

In the parliamentary session of June 4, 1821, the general debate on the budget enabled La Fayette, under the pretext of those "summary observations"¹ authorized by the articles, to deliver a resounding speech outlining a policy. As was his habit (which his colleagues, even those friendly to him, called his maggot²), he based his argument on the past. The method would have been well enough if the "past" had not been confined to the last half-century at most, and the interpretation always on the same lines—sour criticism of everything which had happened prior to 1789, and praise of all that came after that date: "For," he asserted, "those acts of violence which we all deplore are no more the Revolution than the [massacre of] Saint Bartholomew was a religion, or than you would call

¹ Discussion of the budget.—*Trans.*

² The word is *marotte*: it may mean anything from a fool's cap and bells to a hobby—but it has a pejorative sense—an idiotic hobby. There is no current English word.—*Trans.*

'monarchy' the duke of Alba's eighteen hundred judicial murders. . . ."

Words such as these, and others of the same stamp which followed them, were not to be listened to calmly. General Foy shouted bravo, the Left laughed, the Right exploded in a burst of imprecations. Every one of Gilbert's speeches provoked an uproar.

"Your doctrines are abominable!"

"Go on, proclaim the most sacred of duties!"¹

"He thinks he's still on his white horse!"

"What! Been asleep ever since October 6!"—etc.—etc.

Some of these *ripostes* seem positively tragic, precisely because those who made them, while avoiding more personal insults, were able to emphasize La Fayette's personal responsibility. La Serre, a dying man, struggled to his feet to indict Gilbert, "When civil war breaks out, the blood spilled is on the head of him who provoked it; the speaker knows that better than anyone. He has learned more than once—with death in his soul and shame upon his brow—that he who rouses raging mobs is obliged first to follow, and then to lead them."

On that day Benjamin Constant succeeded the Hero of Two Worlds on the tribune. He mentioned his "honourable predecessor".

"He's not *honourable* for us," shouted a voice from the Right. "He may be to the gentlemen on the Left—they're welcome!"

La Fayette's policy speech, printed and widely distributed, sowed the wind, but it was the King's government which reaped the whirlwind, through the heart of which the ageing *Kayewla*, cool and disdainful as ever, made his way, limping—a fortuitous resemblance to Talleyrand; for, in that month of June 1821, he had "one foot crippled and the other rather swollen by gout".

¹ Insurrection. See Rights of Man.—*Trans.*

Chapter 22



BROTHER MASONS AND COUSIN "COAL MERCHANTS"

THE death of Napoleon on May 5, 1821, began the era of the Napoleonic legend, thus enabling the liberal opposition to close its ranks and present that solid front which had been wanting. As in the case of Charlemagne—but that took several centuries—so, in the case of Napoleon, legend made a travesty of an historic character and his rôle in history.

The people's imagination seized upon and adopted the Las Casas *Mémorial* as a kind of evangel. Napoleon appeared not as he was, that is, an opportunist of genius, but as a messianic theorist, making war only to found a universal peace, tyrannizing over France and Europe only to lay the foundations of liberty. The *Acte additionnel*, a good deal more reserved from the liberal point of view than Louis XVIII's *Charte octroyée*, was nevertheless looked upon as the first symptom of new and better times, and its effect was to unite the military and liberal spirits in a common hostility to the royal government.

This coalition operated both in the Chamber and in the country at large. In the Chamber it was kept well in hand by an imposing majority of Right and Right-Centre deputies which barred its way to office—seemingly for a long time to come. In the country at large it was checked by the administrative *cadres*, prefects, and sub-prefects chosen by the government, and by the police. As a result, the coalition's activities were of two kinds: legal and open on the one hand, illegal and clandestine on the other; an ambiguous situation, and a source of conflicts.

The parliamentary government, then, on the English model so very ill-adapted to the French temperament, was functioning "on a volcano", to use the metaphor of the period. A volcano

which looked rather like a coal furnace, if we may be allowed a pun of that kind, for it was beneath the sign “ventes de Charbonnerie”¹ that, from 1821 onwards, the opposition gathered for its struggle with the royal government.

The origin of this organization can be traced to the time when, after the failure of the *Bazar* conspiracy, at the end of the summer and in the autumn of 1820, a number of the conspirators crossed the Alps and joined in the revolutionary movement which was becoming increasingly important in Italy. Two of these young men, having been initiated into the Carbonari in Naples, returned to France, bringing with them the *Charbonnerie* system of organization.

The reader may require reminding of the structure of the society. At the top a “wholesale” (“*haute vente*”) department elected its own members. At the bottom, the “retailers” (“*ventes particulières*”), the number of which was unlimited, were each composed of twenty members who chose among themselves a president, a censor and a deputy. When, in any one town, there were twenty “retail coal merchants”, their twenty deputies met to form a “central sales” (“*vente centrale*”), an organization intermediate between “wholesale” and “retail”.

Only the deputies of these “central sales” were in touch with the “wholesale”. By this means the risks of indiscretion and denunciation were limited; the secret of the general organization was known only to a very small number of leaders.

Every member had to give four undertakings:

To keep the secret of the association.

To own a firearm and twenty-five cartridges.

To pay a subscription of one franc a month.

To be ready to obey any order from “Wholesale”.

In close relationship with freemasonry, the Carbonari² differed from it in certain respects, notably in its vocabulary. Members did not call each other *brother* (masons), but “good cousin carbonari” (in France, *Charbonniers*). The centres of meeting were not called *lodges* but *baragues*.

¹ “Coal merchants”.—*Trans.*

² I shall use the familiar Italian name.—*Trans.*

Approached by two publicists of the liberal opposition, Cauchois-Lemaire and Arnold Scheffer, brother of the painter, La Fayette accepted the presidency of the "*vente suprême*", the highest order. He brought in his friends, the barrister Mérilhou, the deputies François de Corcelles and Jacques Koechlin. Meetings were held at the house of Rouen the elder, in the *rue Christine*. In the provinces La Grange was one of the Carbonari *baragues*. Recruiting was brisk, the number of members increased, the country was divided into three divisions: the east under Buchez, the west under Rouen the elder, the south under Arnold Scheffer. In barely six months there were members in every town in France.

The great names in the opposition were to be found in the "*ventes*", as also a number of future outstanding figures of 1848;¹ they included Théodore Jouffroy, Augustin Thierry, Pierre Leroux, Ary Scheffer, Marchais, Boinvilliers, Bazard, Trélat, Guinard, d'Argenson, Manuel and, needless to say, George Lafayette, who was passionately loyal to his father's ideas, which he shared.

A certain number refused to join the Carbonari, preferring to confine their activities to parliamentary opposition, notably Rémusat, La Fayette's nephew, and Duvergier de Hauranne. The bond which held the society together, a very strong one, was hatred of the Bourbon monarchy, but apart from that there was no unity of opinions. President of the "*haute vente*", La Fayette made no change whatever in his principles. He still wanted, as he had done thirty years before, to restore sovereignty to the nation itself and leave the nation to decide its own fate.

Manuel's policy was different in that he considered it necessary to present the electorate with a government formed in advance; it was based on the singular notion that political planning should take the Constitution of 1791 as a point of departure, and consider everything which had happened since then in the political field as null and void. The Constitution had fixed a term of thirty years after which it could be subject to revision: that term expired in 1821.

Manuel defended this thesis at a meeting of the "*haute vente*", but his "good cousin Carbonari" did not adopt it and

¹ "*Vieilles barbes.*"—*Trans.*

decided that it would be best to select a Constituent Assembly to resolve all problems. This enabled the Bonapartists, although their own programme was rejected, to make common cause with the Carbonari in clearing the way by driving out the Bourbons, leaving the dynastic question to be settled later.

Very soon left well behind by a majority of revolutionary elements, Gilbert nevertheless would not withdraw from the fight, and still gave evidence of the same dynamism in each of his succeeding attitudes. Abnegation, or failure to face facts? Laffitte said to him one day, "You are a statue in search of a pedestal; it would not much matter to you if it were a scaffold."

The General's immediate answer was only one word—"perhaps". But to those acquaintances who urged him to be prudent, he said more, "I have lived a long time: it seems to me that I should end my career worthily if I did so on the scaffold, a martyr for liberty."

If we are to believe the liberal, as opposed to the royalist historians, Carbonarism was only introduced into France in order to combat the *Congrégation*. This word is given three or four rather different meanings in contemporary writings.¹

In 1821, for the men of the Left and therefore for La Fayette, it was a religiously based secret society involved in implacable political action, inspired by the *comte d'Artois*, directed by the Jesuits, and imposing on the King an anti-liberal policy which was not to his taste; which, moreover, was trussing up the country in a network of officialdom that rendered all effort at

¹ Father Bertier de Sauvigny, in his book entitled *Le comte Fernand de Bertier de Sauvigny et l'énigme de la Congrégation* (Presses Continentales, 1948), indicated four:

(a) Marian association founded by Father Delpuits in 1801 and developed under the Restoration by Father Ronsin, S.J. This was its usual meaning before 1822.

(b) The secret society of the *Chevaliers de la Foi*, also known to its contemporaries as the *Société de l'Anneau* or *Gouvernement occulte*—the most usual meaning from 1821 to 1826.

(c) An entity imagined by Montlosier, but which may have served nevertheless to designate the active party of Churchmen and the devout of the Court entourage.

(d) It may be, finally, that the term is used as synonymous with *Jesuits*; such is the meaning which it bears in scurrilous pamphlets of about 1828.

legal opposition futile, prefects and other public servants being chosen by the *Congrégation*, and ruthlessly "purged" the moment they deviated from the party line.¹ It was a "black" network, owing to the colour of the soutane, and because its business was nothing less than to "thrust the country back into the darkness of obscurantism", according to the liberal formula of the times. The assertion was at least a convenient justification for violent action on the opposition's part.

Whether they did or did not have the *Congrégation* to cope with, the Carbonari did not cease from organizing plots with a persistence unchecked by repeated failures. The list is a long one, and painful to read when one thinks of the blood which was spilled in the course of these operations. Ex-officers of the Empire, students, Italian, German and Polish patriots banished from their countries, all competed in staking their lives against odds so enormous that they astound us.

La Fayette did much to maintain the sacred fire burning in conspiratorial bosoms, and it is possible that, convinced that a powerful, although clandestine, political action was being sustained by the Royalist party, he had conceived the idea of a *riposte* in kind by means of the Carbonari. His attitude, always outwardly cold, served the purpose of his campaign admirably while to some extent protecting him from the numerous spies maintained by the government to keep him under observation and make reports on his activities. The indiscretions and want of prudence which caused most of the plots to fail never came from him. He was so successful in keeping out of trouble that some historians, failing to take account of the Favras talisman, have not hesitated to say hard things concerning the prudence which kept him safely clear of the police nets, in which his active associates left their heads, or at least their liberty.

La Fayette left three rather brief notes about secret societies: the first, apart from some general considerations, contains a political programme, incidentally very restricted, consisting of putting back into force four of the laws passed in 1791: the Municipal Law, in the form which Napoleon had given it during

¹ Readers of *Le Rouge et le Noir* will be familiar with the workings of this organization as Stendhal presents it.—*Trans.*

the Hundred Days; the *Départementale* Law, whereby, in the chief town of every *Département* and *Arrondissement*, five citizens were to be placed who were "capable of reviving patriotism, preventing excesses and setting anxieties at rest"; permanent arming of the National Guards, who were to appoint their own officers, which according to La Fayette would prevent foreigners from entering the Guard; if they did enter it they would be smothered (*étouffés* [sic]). Finally, appointment of a Constituent Assembly according to the law of 1791. "As for me," he concluded, "I can give no undertaking in favour of any special party because, being faithful to both parliamentary institutions and to the dynasty, and having no more desire for office now than I had thirty years ago, I believe myself to be of use for the defence of the general interests against the encroachments and intrigues of whatever party should establish itself in power. But I shall always be ready to come to terms with good Frenchmen willing and able to re-establish Liberty and national independence and to put the nation in a position to give itself the government of its choice."

The Belfort conspiracy of December 1821 is worth a special study because La Fayette was officially involved in it from the start and played a decisive part in it. It was essentially a military conspiracy. Its prime movers were officers who had been acquitted by the Paris courts in the *Bazar* affair, but not reinstated in the army. Deprived of their pay, obliged to work for their living, they had found billets in various industrial undertakings directed by La Fayette's friends Koechlin and d'Argenson, in the region of Belfort and Mulhouse.

They had made contact with brother officers in the neighbouring garrisons, notably with the officers of three battalions of the 29th Line Regiment stationed, respectively, at Belfort, Huningue and Neuf-Brisach. Meanwhile Buchez and Koechlin were founding, at Mulhouse, "*ventes*" of Carbonari and were planning to organize more in other towns of the region. There were ramifications at Strasbourg, Metz and Épinal, among the troops in cantonments there, artillery, engineers, engineers' school, and *cuirassiers*. The principals were the half-pay Colonel Sauzet, who had been a member of the Imperial Guard;

Captain Nantil of the *Légion de la Meurthe*; Dumoulin, a former orderly officer of Napoleon's; and some others. A number of lieutenants and sub-lieutenants had promised to bring over their men with them.

The centre of the plot was at Belfort and Neuf-Brisach, whose garrisons were to set the movement going by displaying the three colours. There were to be uprisings in Lyon and Nantes. In Paris the conspirators counted on seizing the fortress of Vincennes, raising the *faubourgs*, and attacking the Tuileries: it was to be a new edition of "August 10". The provisional government, composed of La Fayette, Koechlin and d'Argenson, would be installed first at Colmar, then in Strasbourg as soon as the conspirators were masters of the town. The date for beginning the revolt was to be the night of December 29-30. Anniversaries played an important part in La Fayette's life. One of the most important, it will be remembered, was December 24, that of his wife's death. He spent that day shut up in her room, where nothing had been changed, meditating. Did he pray? And to what God? That was his secret. At all events, taking no account of the length of the journey from La Grange to Alsace and refusing to listen to the arguments of Chevalier, a member of the directing committee sent to fetch him, he refused to break this tradition. When Gilbert's decisions are examined very closely—those decisions taken by himself either in resistance to pressure, or when free from any kind of pressure—his conduct is often revealed as less simple than its appearance, including an element of cold calculation only too worthy of the conspirator which, during the fifteen years of the Restoration, he was. With parliament sitting he could not possibly be absent from the Chamber's sessions without attracting attention. In order to put the police off the track, he was planning to leave at the last possible moment, drive hell-for-leather the whole way, and arrive exactly on time for the execution of the plot.

He set out on December 25, in the evening, with his son. At the last moment he saw his old servant, Bastien, climbing up on to the box of the carriage.

"You know," Gilbert said, "that we are risking our lives and those of anyone who may be taken with us?"

"I know it," Bastien replied. "It's on my own account I'm going—for my opinions."

Dupont de l'Eure, Manuel and Colonel Fabvier were following at an interval of several hours.

An explosion, entirely fortuitous, in the powder magazine at Vincennes, on the evening before the day the plot was to be put into operation, put the police on the alert and prevented anything being done in Paris.

At Belfort La Fayette's uniform as a General of the National Guard, and his sword, were waiting for him: two members of the committee had taken them on, in advance, in one of his own carriages. The sight of these articles and the assurances given by father and son did something to restore local courage, which had been waning as a result of delays and the prolonged absence of the leaders. But the unfortunate initiative of an adjutant—an order for kit-bags to be packed and flints fitted to muskets, aroused the suspicion of the commanding officer of the place, the *marquis* de Toustain, a former *émigré*. He confined the suspect officers, himself arrested four young men he found guarding a gate of the fortress, ran full into another group of conspirators, and received a pistol-shot but was not hurt, the bullet being stopped by his Saint-Louis cross. Whereupon he had the town gates closed.

Colonel Pailhès, who was to have taken the lead of the movement, was arrested while entertaining a party of officers, fellow-conspirators, to dinner. Finding that all was discovered, the other accomplices fled. Several were arrested on the following day in the neighbouring countryside.

Two of the conspirators, Bazard and the son of de Corcelles, left immediately to warn La Fayette. They met him at Lure. Turning off towards the south, the General went to the house of a friend, Martin, former deputy for Haute-Saône, while all compromising articles were being concealed. These included the carriage, which had been seized and put under seals by the gendarmerie, but a number of bold men contrived to remove it during the night, and then to burn it.

How was it that Gilbert's presence in the house of a member of the extreme Left, in mid-winter, and at seventy leagues from his own home, did not immediately receive attention from the

police, unless there were special orders concerning him? It is, of course, possible that fear of the disturbances which would have been caused by putting the "Hero of Two Worlds" on trial caused the government to shut its eyes to Gilbert's perfectly obvious participation in this plot, the biggest and by far the best organized of the whole series.

A series which was to continue, moreover, with more plots than ever; for bitter though this check was, it did not prevent conspirators from continuing to conspire, nor La Fayette from giving them the support of his name, his prestige, and his money.

Chapter 23



FOR LIBERTY THE IMPLACABLE!

AFTER having been the most hated man of the Revolution, here, then, was La Fayette become if not the best loved, at least the most venerated and loyally followed by all revolutionaries. He, as it were, polarized all malcontents; he breathed into the younger liberals that spirit which makes martyrs.

Hardly had some revolutionary undertaking failed in one town than another was immediately undertaken elsewhere. Thus, almost at the same time as a setback in Saumur, the conspiracy known as that of the Four Sergeants of La Rochelle, organized by Bories, one of their number, broke out. Bories, a Carbonari, had founded a "*vente*" in the 45th Line Regiment, at that time stationed in Paris. A number of other N.C.O.s were "cousins"—notably Pommier, Goubin and Raoulz. Only Bories, however, was introduced to La Fayette and he seems to have been deeply moved by the encounter. His regiment was to play a part in the movement, but General the *comte* de France, commander of the Paris region, received an unfavourable report on Bories' unit, and had it posted to La Rochelle.

Bories set off with his comrades, carrying with him cards cut in half, by means of which he could enter into negotiations with any Carbonari "*vente*" and even with other affiliated societies. The instructions he received gave him the impression that the regiment would not go as far as La Rochelle, but that he would have occasion to take a hand, during the journey, in a more or less important insurrection.

On their way through Orléans there was a brawl between some of the Line Regiment men and the royalist *Suisses* of the garrison: Bories was arrested. On February 14, when the regiment arrived at La Rochelle, the sergeant was kept in solitary confinement and then transferred to Nantes. The conspiracy,

however, was being developed among his accomplices, who were still receiving orders from the "*Haute vente*". But the police, on the watch, arrested each of them in turn, and discovered daggers, the divided cards and other compromising articles hidden in their palliasses. They were interrogated and a number confessed. In vain did Bories declare that he alone was responsible, and try to cover his comrades: they were all condemned to death and guillotined.

The effect of this execution was great and it produced two kinds of reaction. One, the most apparent, was diametrically opposite to what the government had hoped for: pity for the victims' youth and admiration for their courage and brotherly loyalty made people forget that their plotting might have exposed the whole country to bloody conflicts. Lamentations, newspaper articles, public speeches, extolled and glorified these "victims of tyranny", systematically forgetting all the victims whom they were preparing to sacrifice.

The other effect, of longer duration, was ultimately to put an end to the career of the Carbonari in France, less because of the failure of the plot as such, than because of the powerlessness of the society to save the condemned men. The Parisian Carbonari had sworn that on the day appointed for the execution they would slip through the crowd to the front, immediately behind the file of gendarmes, and would strike down the latter with their daggers. The condemned men were informed of this project; but at the critical moment nothing whatever happened or was even attempted. This weakness and failure were to be severely condemned.

Something of a less spectacular kind was, indeed, attempted. Seventy thousand francs were promised to the governor of Bicêtre prison, and provided by La Fayette, to let the prisoners escape. Somebody talked: the prefect of police questioned the governor, who pretended that he had been laying a trap for the conspirators. The prefect pretended to believe him and his men walked into the room at the moment when La Fayette's agent, a medical student named Latousche, was handing over the first payment. The General was thus ten thousand francs out of pocket, although the source of the bribe money long remained unknown, despite investigations and perquisitions.

La Fayette would have risked his life far more than he did had his friends not restrained him. The immunity which he enjoyed does not seem to have been due to his own cleverness, but to orders emanating from very high up indeed. To what extent did he take advantage of that immunity? The Procurator Royal, Mangin, had included his name in the indictment of Berton who had, in fact, been introduced to him; the same document contained the names of Benjamin Constant and Laffitte. In the Chamber La Fayette proclaimed his contempt for these threats, "sequel to the long war begun thirty-three years ago against the enemies of liberty, a war in the course of which he had fought those enemies under the royal colours, beneath the standard of the aristocracy and under the bloody banners of the democracy". He concluded his speech with a tendentious phrase, possibly aimed at the King himself, claiming "the greatest possible publicity, in the bosom of this Chamber, under the eyes of the nation. It is here that we, my accusers and myself, *whatever be their rank*, should speak out to each other, bluntly, and say what we have, for many years, had against each other."

He expected the government to take action against him and told his friends so, while refusing, however, to take their advice. Chauvelin offered him asylum at Cîteaux. "My life is not worth the trouble of dissimulation," he replied. "I shall go from Paris to La Grange and from La Grange to Paris."

Whatever may have been his indifference to his personal risks, he was nevertheless very much to blame, above all for having persisted in his behaviour after the failure of the first plot, and continued to use his influence over youth to involve them in adventures the outcome of which was nearly always fatal to them. Was his conduct due to unawareness? (Such was the opinion of several of his contemporaries. Rostopchine, the man who burned Moscow, called Manuel a rascal and La Fayette stupid.) Or rather to vanity, a refusal to deviate from his course? It is likely enough. Or was it insensibility, cold-heartedness in respect to those who lost their lives? In spite of appearances, no: but he was possessed by the dreadful spirit of the man who puts theory (or "the party") above everything and takes no account whatever of the consequences for indi-

viduals: they were "sacrifices necessary to the triumph of the Cause"—a formula which has all too often been used to cover not simply acts of imprudence but veritable crimes.

To sum up, then, the most evident result of these plots was to frighten public opinion and throw the middle classes into the arms of the reactionaries.

It is not our business to repeat the history of the Congress of Verona and of the French intervention in Spain in 1823,¹ in which the leading rôle was Chateaubriand's. Here we need only remind the reader that one of the most serious incidents in the history of the Restoration parliaments occurred in connection with the credits which the government asked for to finance the expeditionary force required to put Ferdinand VII, the legitimate king, back on his throne. This incident was the expulsion of the deputy Manuel, a member of the Carbonari "*haute vente*", La Fayette's friend and an ardent extreme Left orator.

The General had, needless to say, taken up an attitude hostile to the war, which he considered anti-national and anti-liberal; he could not see that it would raise France's prestige and enable her to resume her place among Europe's leading powers, which was Chateaubriand's calculation. Manuel, in the Chamber, had evoked the memory of the Stuarts, driven out of England, and of Louis XVI beheaded for having sought the support of foreign armies. The implication was unpleasant hearing for Louis XVIII, who was always touchy about the reproach that he had made his return "in the Allies' baggage-train".

A storm of interruption and cries of *Order!* broke out on the Right, provoking a furious response from the Left; Manuel, making matters worse, shouted:

"Is it necessary for me to add that the danger to the royal family in France became much more serious when foreign forces had invaded our territory and that France, revolutionary France, feeling the need to defend herself by new forces and with a new energy——"

Before the end of the sentence, however, Hyde de Neuville had rushed to the tribune and, drowning both the general uproar and the speaker's voice, cried, "I demand to avenge France!"

¹ *La Sainte-Alliance*, by M. de la Fuye and E. A. Babeau, pp. 155, *et seq.*

Violent pandemonium on the Right: "Expel that infamous fellow! He's justifying the regicides! Order! Exclude him! We will not sit with him!"

Forbin des Issarts next mounted the tribunal—there were now three of them trying to make themselves heard—and shouted, "I propose his expulsion!"

It was in vain that Ravez, the president, ringing his bell, tried to restore order and remind the Chamber of the rule which allowed speakers to explain what they had meant to say; all he achieved was renewed uproar. The Right and Right-Centre deputies withdrew into the offices and the session was suspended for an hour. When business was resumed, however, passions were no calmer. Manuel wanted to finish what he had been saying: he was prevented. Whereupon he handed the president a letter which he had written during the suspension, and with the advice of his friends, to justify himself. Ravez tried to read it. His voice was drowned by the noise. It was believed—or there was a pretence of believing—that the paper contained Manuel's resignation. From the Right there were shouts of "He's purging us of his presence! He's doing justice on himself!"

Seeing that debate was impossible, the president finally closed the session. On the following day, February 27, after the reading of the minutes, M. de La Bourdonnaie ascended the tribune and proposed Manuel's expulsion. Manuel was given the floor to make his reply, but in vain; an imposing majority voted for his exclusion for the rest of the session. Sapey tabled a motion to establish that a two-thirds majority was necessary for this purpose. The president would not accept it, basing his refusal on the rules. This brought La Fayette to his feet. "The rules did not foresee the infamous *coup d'état* you are about to commit." General Foy and Casimir Périer spoke in the same sense, supported by the entire Left.

On the following day at the opening of the session only the Right and Right-Centre benches were occupied. Soon, however, Manuel appeared at the head of his friends, all in their Deputies' uniform. He took his seat between Casimir Périer and General Demarçay. The president called on him to withdraw.

After he had been twice summoned to withdraw, without effect, the principal usher went out to fetch a detachment of the

National Guard and a picket of regular army veterans. There were protests from the Left.

La Fayette: It's dishonouring the National Guard.

The officer in charge of the veterans ordered a sergeant, Mercier, to advance with his men. The N.C.O. hesitated while La Fayette kept up a barrage of objurgation amidst the applause of the Left. The president then summoned Colonel de Foucauld, who commanded a detachment of *Gendarmerie*. The Colonel summoned Manuel to quit the Chamber. Challenged by the Left, he replied, "The *Gendarmerie* has only come to second the National Guard."

Voice from the Left: The National Guard refuses to become accessory to this outrage.

Colonel de Foucauld: I call upon M. Manuel for the last time. I should be deeply distressed to use force against a deputy, but I should do so, since it is my duty.

Manuel: Then use force.

The opposition proclaimed its solidarity with the suspended deputy. Thenceforth until the end of the session none of its members took their seats. La Fayette returned to La Grange and in an open letter to his constituents—he sat for Meaux—he praised sergeant Mercier to the skies for his "civic and legal disobedience", which no doubt reminded him of the *Gardes-françaises* supporting the rioters in July 1789.

As a consequence of this affair Manuel and Mercier were for a while such bright stars in the public eye as almost to eclipse the Congress of Verona and Chateaubriand. But Manuel was at odds with La Fayette. He considered that Liberty, as an abstraction to rouse the people, was grown too cold to be effectual. Whereas a man's name, Bonaparte for example, retains all its dynamic force. It would be necessary to attain the Republic by way of Napoleon II, a proposition which the General would by no means accept. On the other hand, for the time being, he had no hope of making his own ideas prevail. It was in the New World only that he placed his hopes. In November of 1823 he wrote to his friend General de Miollis.¹

¹ Unpublished letter kindly made available to the authors by Mme la baronne de Miollis.

" . . . The dissolution of the Chamber which is said on all sides to be imminent will send me back to my *Département* for the period of the elections. We are promised seven-year parliaments which killed liberty in England; our own, soiled by the Terror and the Imperial counter-revolution and the Royal counter-revolution, will, I hope, be reborn in the west and south of Europe; if not, these beautiful lands, having no great democratic¹ masses to oppose to the autocratic masses of the northern armies, will fall a prey to a new invasion of barbarians and will leave all that is intelligent and generous in the countries whose civilization they are trying to stifle, surviving only in America.

"Meanwhile, our United States are prospering, splendid federal republics are being organized in Mexico and in South America; the African population of Hayisi [sic] is even making progress: there are, therefore, despite the continental coalition, Europe's and England's perfidious diplomacy, great resources for the betterment of human destinies. You will not, my dear Miollis, have left part of your jaw in the York Town trenches in vain."

A singularly prophetic vision, although the threat which, one century later, was to hang over Europe was that of a despotism other than the tsar's; but the prognostication is curious, and particularly the rôle of America as the refuge of civilization in the event of Europe becoming "a prey to a new invasion of barbarians".

For the moment, however, the commander of the 1789 National Guard was being outstripped. A group of young writers, among them his grandson Rémusat, Jouffroy, Sainte-Beuve, Duvergier de Hauranne, Duchâtel, Lermnier and Vitet, founded a newspaper, *Le Globe*, with a liberal policy but free from the philosophic intolerance of the *Constitutionnel*. While they called Thiers a "little Jacobin", they did not hesitate to call La Fayette "an old booby", despite their common respect for Mme de Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française*.²

In the elections of 1824, after the dissolution of the Chamber forecast in his letter to his friend, Gilbert obtained only 152

¹ "masses populaires". The word democracy was hardly in use, but "popular masses" has not the same implication in English.—*Trans.*

² Thureau-Dangin. *Le parti libéral sous la Restauration*, pp. 219, 223, 225.

votes against the 184 cast for the government's candidate, Pinteville de Cernon.

No doubt strong government pressure was brought to bear against the apologist for indiscipline. But the suffrages which, by falling to his opponent, obliged Cincinnatus to return to his plough for the time being, were also about to send him to enjoy a transatlantic triumph. His setback in the election and his difference of opinion with Manuel decided him to accept the invitation extended to him by President Monroe. For the fourth and last time in his life, at sixty-six years of age, George Washington's friend embarked for the United States.¹

¹ In his *Introduction à l'Histoire de dix ans*, Louis Blanc asserts that this journey was the result of an offer of five millions which had been made to the General on behalf of *prince* Eugène de Beauharnais to provoke a revolution in his favour, an offer which La Fayette is supposed not to have wanted either to accept, or definitely reject.

Chapter 24



THE PILGRIM OF GLORY

LA FAYETTE left France after a defeat. Defeated by the reactionaries he had the air of a man proscribed. True, a voluntary "proscript", but thrust out of the political arena and deprived of his best instrument of propaganda, the tribune of the Chamber.

Louis XVIII (very near his end; he was to die in September) saw him go with satisfaction, for he was as troublesome to the King, in the liberal opposition, as Chateaubriand, the *enfant terrible* of the Royalist party, was capable of being on the majority side of the Chamber.

Proclaimed "the nation's guest", La Fayette was received in the land of Independence as if he were a Chief of State. He travelled, simply, in an American packet, the *Cadmus*, but only because he had chosen to do so. Not being able to settle the exact date of his departure in advance, he did not accept the American frigate which President Monroe had offered to send for him.

The crossing lasted thirty-three days. He noted that he arrived in New York on August 15, Napoleon's birthday, and that the artillery salvos fired in his honour came from Fort Lafayette. More fortunate than the Emperor, he was able to be present, alive, at his own apotheosis. Official ceremonies, however brilliant they might be, faded into insignificance beside the population's enthusiasm, a sincere expression of the love in which he was held by the American people. Here was his real fatherland! The myth of Antaeus was evoked, Antaeus who restored his youth and strength by contact with the Earth which bore him. The old man was to retrace the footsteps of the youth, who, from Boston to Charleston, had remained the symbol of

Liberation and who shared, with Washington, the fatherhood of the new republic.

In the roadstead a ship, the *Chancellor Livingstone*, came to meet him, carrying the city magistrates, some of the General's old comrades-in-arms, and a band playing an appropriate French tune:

*Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille?*¹

Monroe, the President who welcomed him, had already proclaimed his famous doctrine excluding Europe from meddling in American affairs, and undertaking that America would keep out of Europe's business. Had a prophet arisen on that day to tell both of them, the Chief of State of the Union and the ex-commander of the National Guard of France, that less than a century later an American General would be saluting the Frenchman's tomb with his sword while announcing, "*La Fayette, nous voici!*", the ageing *Kayewla* would not, perhaps, have been the more surprised of the two: for he had, as we know, a habit of galloping through centuries to come. . . .

Tomorrow's French Ambassador—thus he seemed, as he stood on the ship's deck to receive the homage of the delegation sent to meet him. Separated from Europe by an ocean which took more than a month to cross, did the Americans realize the changes which had occurred in France since 1780, the present differences between the two States? Was not the Louis who now reigned in the Tuileries the brother of that good, that other Louis who had been so generous and had signed the Treaty of Alliance with the United States? La Fayette was, in their eyes, the incarnation of eternal France, disinterested, prodigal with her blood and treasure in the service of the oppressed. Without knowing it, the General was drawing a gigantic draft on the future, for the future, to be valued by reference to what, in the twentieth century, the United States he had fought for forty years earlier, would have become. The harbour was

¹ "Where can one be better off than in the bosom of one's family?" The tune which the band of the Imperial Guard began to play at the crossing of the Berezina and which Napoleon stopped with a gesture, saying "Play, rather, *Veillons au salut de l'Empire*" (Let us watch over the safety of the Empire!).

crowded with thirty thousand people come to cheer him. The members of his guard, who bore the title *La Fayette's Guards*, wore his portrait on a medallion pinned to their chest. As he passed, at the head of a numerous staff, in front of each militia unit, the standard-bearers lowered their colours in salute, and each colour was crowned with a ribbon bearing the legend *Welcome La Fayette*. The same legend appeared on every public building, and was shouted by the crowd. Showers of flowers poured from the windows. At every cross-roads bands played his own tune—*See the conquering hero comes*. For the drive to the City Hall he was provided with a triumphal car drawn by four white horses (did he remember Marie-Antoinette's, which had been used to draw first Mirabeau, then Marat, to the Panthéon?).

He listened to the mayor's speech, which was strongly tinged with optimism. The orator was sure that La Fayette was as dear to his friends of the Old Continent as to those of the New World. But he spoke truth indeed when he said, "The people of the United States cherish you as a venerated father; the fatherland considers you as its most beloved son." And then, a promise which should be recalled, for it was to be kept, "Today, as in times to come, the behaviour of my fellow-citizens will prove the mistake made by those who claim that a republic is always ungrateful towards its benefactors."

Followed a march past lasting two hours, in the course of which children were brought to him to be blessed. He stood up to all and to everything, without apparent fatigue, smiling, astonishingly young. When, at last, he was taken to his residence so that he might rest, the door by which he entered was dressed with the three colours.

New York for four days—four days and nights of engagements—just as a beginning, followed by the start of a tour throughout the whole extent of the Union. For a man of his age it was equal to a campaign, his fourth, but in the course of which he was no longer a general but a pastor: it was a kind of episcopal visitation. But not exclusive: he was to be seen at Catholic Masses, Protestant sermons and Masonic lodge meetings.

On August 20 he left for Boston, Mass., by way of Fairfield, New Haven, New London (Connecticut), Providence (Rhode Island). Everywhere the militia was on parade in full-dress

uniform, there were salvos of cannon, and the bells were rung. The mayor of Boston, in his address, drew attention to changes: La Fayette had come, in his youth, to enlist under the banner of three million people engaged in an unequal and doubtful struggle. Now he was being received by ten million, their children, whose hearts rejoiced at his approach. And this, the mayor continued, was not the mere impulse of a turbulent multitude, but the feeling of a great people yielding to a serious moral and intellectual idea.

During dinner Chief Justice Parker proposed a toast to the memory of Louis XVI; "not one of those", he said, "who favoured American independence ought to be forgotten".

To all the speeches which were addressed to him, and which Chateaubriand in his *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* praises for their elevated tone and simple manner, La Fayette replied. His own speeches were impeccable, short—which is worth noting—and admirably balanced: praises for progress made, gratitude for his welcome, pride in old battles, all expressed in a very academic style—a shade too academic. In the course of a tour of two thousand leagues, every stage of which was punctually recorded by his faithful secretary Levasseur, George Washington's friend experienced "everything which is capable of flattering or touching the human heart". He made a halt at Monticello, the home of Jefferson, former Ambassador to France, now broken by his infirmities but with heart and memory intact; and another at the home of the not less aged John Adams, Washington's successor as President of the United States. At the University the tone was set by Professor Everett's address which hailed and welcomed him as "the friend of our fathers", and urged him to enjoy a triumph greater than any to be hoped for by conquerors or monarchs in the certainty that there was not one heart present which failed to beat with joy and gratitude at the sound of his name.

A ball with six thousand guests preceded his departure for Albany on a steamboat, a great novelty of the period, and which made several stops, notably at the West Point Military Academy. Aboard the vessel, which—comfort having become the rule—was "like a floating hotel", "a very agreeable company of ladies will be of the party". It was known that the General

was partial to such company. He notes that "in the midst of gatherings, reviews, *fêtes*, on Sunday people go to a Catholic church or a temple. . . .¹ The other day in Boston there were prayers to God for liberty in both hemispheres; this kind of piety suits me better than the counter-revolutionary anathemas of Europe." As always, it was still impossible for him to see and recognize the radical difference, in this matter, separating the New World from the Old.²

When he made his entry into Philadelphia, on September 28, he was escorted by four large, uncovered waggons upon each of which there were forty veterans of the war. The town was new: he recognized nothing but the Congress building. He was shown an hydraulic machine concerning which he asked so many questions that he was later given a model of it, so that he could have a similar one built at La Grange. Another speech: evocation of absent comrades, homage to Washington's memory. Official reception in the Hall of Independence, where he received a visit from all the ministers of all the different religious sects, all together—thoroughly American and completely in accord with the hero's ideas. The worthy Quakers alone excused themselves, explaining that "their religious scruples prevented them from taking any part in an address which was concerned with military success".

In his American fatherland there were no false brothers; no sardonic Talleyrand, no painful memories brutally recalled by jealous opponents. In the United States, so far as he was concerned, everybody was sincere, everyone and everything in earnest. After forty years, although the setting had changed so greatly, the feelings remained immutable: material progress had, in fact, strengthened them, since people were grateful to him not only for what he had accomplished but for what the land of his adoption had become since he left it.

Thirty-seven masonic lodges bore his name. At Elizabethtown, in September 1824, he was raised to the degree of *Royal*

¹ Protestant "meeting".—*Trans.*

² We should recall that it was in the course of his visit to the *Four of Wilmington* Lodge (Delaware) that La Fayette revealed how his entry in American freemasonry was really the origin of his success in the United States. See Chapter 3.

Arch. And Lebey recalls, as one example among many others, that at Fredericksburg a procession was formed and, "on coming out of Lodge No. 4, went to church where an excellent sermon was preached by the Rev. Edward C. MacGaire, after which the brothers returned to the lodge".

We do not judge;¹ we merely state the facts in so far as they enable us to throw some light upon the character of the man—who was so fortunate as to find, in America, a combination unknown in Europe, a freedom of thought and action such as he had conceived of and which he was to persist, until his dying day, in believing possible for all peoples everywhere, even among the French, despite the fact that Mallet du Pan had declared them incapable of understanding liberty.

But in France the basic principles of the State had, since 1789, been ceaselessly argued and battered at, there had been no stable government, and La Fayette must bear his share—a large one—of responsibility for this state of affairs. In France he was strong to destroy and weak to build. In the United States he had, by force of circumstances, really been a builder. The Americans had seen only the splendid side of their hero, the side by which he was, as it were, related to Washington. And *that* La Fayette had never left the New World. The citizens of the United States found him in 1824 as he had been in 1781, despite the, as it were, interregnum of more than a generation.

The pilgrimage to the battlefields took him north, south, east and west. Everywhere he noted progress, progress occurring at that constantly increasing pace which was already—and every day to a greater extent—becoming the distinguishing attribute of work in the United States. Besides this activity Europe seemed to him to be stagnating, which was true, but concerning the cause of this difference he made a fundamental mistake. He believed that it was thanks to liberty that every-

¹ For the benefit of those readers with small knowledge of France, this combination of freemasonry and Christian worship would seem extremely odd, even outrageous, freemasonry in France being regarded as implacably anti-clerical and possibly anti-Christian. It is, of course, under the ban of the Roman Catholic Church. The whole paragraph might, without this explanation, seem obscure.—*Trans.*

thing was going so well in America, and that in Europe the want of liberty explained why everything was going so badly. The "redoubtable horseman" was forgetting an essential point, although he had it under his nose: the immense resources of this virgin country, where there was room for everybody and which, by reason of its still unexploited riches, called forth every kind of activity and permitted every kind of initiative in enterprise. In his imaginary paradise, where the goddess Liberty sat enthroned on the clouds, he completely lost sight of European realities—Europe was poor, relatively over-populated by comparison with its resources, and divided into rival States. He was, more than ever before, "General Rainbow",¹ but in this context the nickname took on a sense very different from that which the wit who had conceived it thirty-five years earlier had had in mind.

A visit—already referred to—to John Adams, Washington's immediate successor in the Presidency, at his house near Quincy, a very simple house where he received the man he had known when his visitor was so young and himself had hardly reached his prime. The patriarch was eighty-nine years old and his whole family was present to witness the *accolade* between the two men, an embrace deriving from sincere and reciprocal feeling in two who held the same faith.

Jefferson, not quite so old—he was eighty-one—was nevertheless confined to his house by his infirmities, which, incidentally, did not prevent him from founding a university at Charlottesville. Tirelessly, while awaiting his friend's visit, he wrote him letters of advice.

Did the General really visit one hundred and eighty-two towns, as one of his biographers asserts? Even though this figure may be exaggerated, there still remain enough documents to prove that La Fayette allowed himself no rest, apart from six days with Jefferson and rather less time with Madison, between the 8th and the 20th of November.

When he disembarked at Fort MacHenry in Baltimore, he found Washington's own tent pitched for his reception. Carroll, third president of the old Congress, and last survivor of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence, was there,

¹ i.e., shining *after* the storm; see *supra*.—*Trans.*

surrounded by a number of volunteer dragoons who had fought in the Virginia campaign. For Gilbert he was an old friend, and they embraced in tears. Followed a visit from the archbishop, and another to the Catholic church, with George.

Two days later came the pilgrimage to Washington's tomb. The French party was received at Mount Vernon by Lewis, nephew of the first President of the United States, and by Custis, Mrs Washington's grandson. From the house he was taken to the family tomb. Custis, with a few ceremonial words, presented him with a ring in which was set a lock of his old friend's hair. The General went down into the crypt alone, to visit the tombs of Washington and his wife. When he came out again his face, usually smiling or impassive, bore witness to profound emotion.

In Baltimore he was already aware of the reception which awaited him in the political capital of the United States: "We shall enter Washington the day after tomorrow: the corporation propose to receive me *in fiocchi*; the ministers of the Holy Alliance should enjoy that." (Always a passing, glancing claw-stroke for his enemies!) On the 27th he received sad news from Europe: the deaths of his old friend Mme d'Hénin, and of Lacretelle, the academician. Despite his grief he could not interrupt the festivities, "to achieve which there have been so many discussions, so much expense of money and labour". At the York Town reception he hoped to see the officers of a visiting French flotilla, having been told that the navy was inclined to be liberal. However, "the sailors confined themselves to sending amiable messages and did not dare go beyond that".

Richmond, York Town—glorious stages in the war—now public holidays; a brief holiday at Monticello, Jefferson's home. A visit to the Academy founded by the former diplomat. Public banquet at Charlottesville. Jefferson, too tired to speak, had to have his reply to the toast of himself read by someone else. Even so, "everybody shed tears". Recalling his time as Minister to France, he had written of La Fayette in connection with the Treaty: "We held the nail, but it was he who drove it in."

A few more days of comparative rest at Madison's house, and then he went to Washington towards the end of November.

President Monroe had had an apartment got ready for father and son, "but the Corporation had wished me to continue as *the people's guest*." He was none the worse housed for that. On the 10th, a solemn ceremony in the Congress. Twenty-four Congressmen came to fetch him: upon his appearance the members all rose to receive him standing. Henry Clay delivered the address. "They expected", La Fayette wrote later, "to see me take paper and spectacles from my pocket, but I made up my mind to speak impromptu and replied as you will see. It is said that I managed very well; you will see that I did not forget to speak of South America; the new independent republics have much goodwill towards me."

The end of the year was approaching and with it an anniversary: that of his wife's death. It will be remembered that in order to keep that day he had, some years earlier, contributed to the failure of an important conspiracy. In the United States he had to confine himself to such meditation as he was allowed time for. "We are", he wrote, "drawing near to that cruel and sacred anniversary which will unite us in the same thoughts and the same worship. We shall, George and I, be isolated from all who were in a position to understand the immensity of our loss. I often think of that admirable sentiment which led her to urge us, as if by instinct, towards the United States. Ah, if only we could have kept her alive to enjoy what she seemed to foresee!"

The last days of the month were spent in Baltimore again, then Fredericktown. The winter hampered his movements no more than it had done forty years ago, and on January 1 he was back in Washington in order to be present at the grand ceremony of wishing the President a happy new year, and then at the dinner to be given to the visitors by both Houses of the legislature combined. They, during his absence, had decided to express the nation's feelings in a positive manner: by a gift of two hundred thousand dollars and an estate of lands from territory belonging to the United States but not yet allotted to a private owner. Even more than the actual gifts, the words with which they were made gave expression to the sentiments which had inspired such generosity. Mr Smith, in the name of both

Senate and House Committees, said, "We have been chosen to express to you the hope of both Houses that, by accepting the gift we are making you, you will add one more proof of esteem to all those you have already given to the American nation."

La Fayette was generous. He found himself being thus repaid a part of the advances he had made in the cause of Independence, and it was done with so much delicacy that "it would be out of the question for me to experience any but grateful feelings".

There was no rest for this galley-slave of glory. By January 20 he was aboard the Richmond steamer on his way to Virginia, where he had been invited. He was also to go to Louisiana, for, as each State administration assembled, it issued an invitation to visit its particular State. Which meant hundreds, thousands of miles by land and water. True, his hosts were taking the utmost care of him!

In the midst of this "continual enchantment which did not leave him time to write" came a new cause for mourning: the death of Mme de Tracy, of which he heard at the end of February and which made those obligations from which he could not withdraw more burdensome. From Suffolk on February 23 he wrote: "Have no fear for our health. During this journey mine has shown itself to be more robust and, so to speak, younger than I myself believed it; it will survive the grievous moral strain created by my sorrow, my thoughts, and the obligation to be continually on show, as it has survived the physical strain of our travelling."

He was evidently almost on the point of claiming to be in a special state of grace granted by the goddess Liberty, whose messiah he still believed himself to be.

This second period of his stay in the United States was if possible even more crowded and active than the first. It started at Fayetteville, a city founded in his honour in North Carolina. He was received by one Gallatin, a Frenchman settled in the United States, on behalf of the county—Fayette County, and he was told, "Here you are at home; everything here belongs to you." On March 15 he visited Charleston with Mr Huger, the son of his first American acquaintance and who, years after

their first meeting, had helped him to escape from an Austrian prison. At Savannah he laid the foundation stone of the monuments to General Greene, his old friend, to Pulaski and to baron Kalb. He had such a crowded agenda that at Milledgeville, on March 28, he was obliged to time his movements to the hour in order to arrive at his rendezvous at Bunker Hill on June 17, to be present at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations and lay the foundation stone of the monument:

"I am", he wrote, "very set upon being there as the representative of the revolutionary army."

In New Orleans, at the risk of affronting established prejudice, he asked to meet those coloured men who had formerly been the soldiers of General Riego, the Spanish revolutionary who had ended a violent career on the gallows. He seized this opportunity to say a word for the Greeks, at that time engaged in their war of liberation against the Turks, and obtained a subscription from the Americans to pay for a steamship to be sent to the Greek patriots.

Only during his passages from place to place by water was he able to enjoy any leisure. Thus, it was from the steamer *Natchez*, on the way up the Mississippi to visit the Western States, that he wrote to Dupont de l'Eure, ". . . this journey alone, a voyage of two thousand leagues . . . we are able to make it only thanks to the steamships, for otherwise we should have been more than a year on the roads." And there was his usual, unchanging profession of political faith: American success was owing exclusively to liberty—"the superiority of our principles over all the follies of despotism and the various aristocracies. . . ."

He had just received a new song by Béranger, composed in anticipation of his return, and most gratifyingly "of the hour":

Republicans, what cortège makes this way?
An aged warrior landing on our shore.
Come from some foreign king a truce to pray?
No, for the rage of kings he fired of yore.
Comes he in force? Alone he crossed the sea.
What has he done then? Stricken off our gyves!
Man of Two Worlds, immortal fame to thee!
And days of triumph lighten all our lives!¹

¹ The translation, owing to the exigencies of the rhyme, is rather free. Béranger's song reads:

Not much better than a jingle: but a jingle according to the fashion of the times.

Steaming up the Ohio from Tennessee to Kentucky, La Fayette's vessel struck a submerged tree and sank. Happily, the river was not deep thereabouts, so that a part of the hull remained above water and all the passengers were saved in a boat, the only victim being the General's little bitch which, he wrote, "was drowned while trying to make sure that I was no longer in our cabin, below, when it was filling up with water". But it is odd that his *Mémoires* do not mention the fact that George, and Levasseur, the secretary, went back on board, at great risk, because Gilbert, like an elderly spoiled child, could not bear to lose a certain snuff-box which Washington had given him.¹

On his way La Fayette visited a little town, Callopolis, inhabited by a few French families, and then began his return towards the Atlantic by way of Lakes Erie and Ontario. He was counting on having leisure to write at his ease "on the fine canal which goes from Lake Erie to Albany, but this county, which was recently a wilderness, is so populous and cultivated that the banks were crowded with friends whose townships we had to visit. Large gatherings awaited us ashore." He also, as a kind of quasi-priest of Independence, had to give his blessing to the monument to Kalb, the man who had introduced him to Lee.

Having reached Albany on June 12, he did not miss the fiftieth anniversary of Bunker Hill, "One of the most splendid patriotic celebrations that can ever have been held. The only thing one can compare to it is the Federation of 1790."

¹ A. Latzko. *Le général Lafayette*, p. 375.

*Républicains, quel cortège s'avance?
Un vieux guerrier, débarqué parmi nous
Vient-il d'un roi nous jurer l'alliance?
Il a des rois allumé le courroux.
Est-il puissant? Seul il franchit les ondes.
Qu'a-t-il donc fait?—Il a brisé des fers,
Gloire immortelle à l'homme des Deux Mondes!
Jours de triomphe, éclairez l'univers!—Trans.*

Webster's eloquent speech enchanted La Fayette, who was congratulated "for having, by the will of Heaven, transmitted an electric spark of liberty from the New World to the Old". For his part the General, in proposing a toast at the banquet of four thousand guests, announced that on the occasion of the century's approaching jubilee they would be celebrating *Europe set free*. The Secretary for War being present at the feast, and having announced the Government's wish to send him back to Europe in a warship, La Fayette replied that he "could not accept the honour unless the ship was being sent on subsequent public business".

This last act of homage on the part of his adopted country caused him to defer his departure for three weeks, weeks as crowded as those which had preceded them, and informed still with the same enthusiasm. At bottom he was delighted with this delay and declared that "it was impossible to refuse, at the risk of disobliging everyone, the handsome forty-four-gun frigate which the government had given the name of a stream (the *Brandywine*) instead of a river, of a defeat instead of a victory, for the sole purpose of recalling his (La Fayette's) first battle, and his wound".

A last round of Virginia to take leave of his friends Jefferson, Madison, Monroe. Farewells which were bound to be melancholy at their age and since, tomorrow, they would be separated by an ocean. The certainty that, for the four of them, there would see no more foregathering here below darkened La Fayette's last days in the land he had made so utterly his own.

From Washington on September 1 he wrote to Simon Bolivar, liberator and President of Peru. His letter was accompanied by a portrait of Washington presented by Mr Custis, and a gold medal from the American nation. Despite which, when the recipient of these gifts lay on his death-bed years later, he gave utterance to a sentiment which would assuredly not have been to La Fayette's taste: "To work for democracy is to plough the sea."

The final scene: a long speech delivered by the new President Adams before a large audience, including members of the Government; he sketched a history of the Union and of La Fayette's contribution to the country's prosperity. He spoke in

terms of poetry of that France to which their friend and guest was returning, fertile and beautiful, mother of Louis XII and Henri IV, of Bayard and Coligny, of Turenne and Catinat, Fénelon and d'Aguesseau. He spoke of La Fayette's name, a name which had been illustrious for many centuries; and he said that if, in times to come, a Frenchman should be called upon to name one man whose character would give the clue to the character of the whole French nation in their own day, then the noble blood of patriotism would colour his cheek, the fire of a resolute virtue shine in his eyes and he would utter a name—La Fayette.

On the following day, in the port, his last farewells were drowned by the roar of saluting cannon and by cheering.

Among the pilgrim's luggage a large and very heavy box had been carried on board the frigate. It contained American earth, destined for Gilbert's grave. For this soldier of two fatherlands, while never denying that which had given him birth, wished to rest at last in the bosom of the other, the land of his election, the land which had chosen Liberty.

Chapter 25



TRUTH BEYOND THE ATLANTIC ERROR ON THIS SIDE

THE General's long visit to the United States gave the language of that country a new word, *lafayetteed*, to describe one who had received an ovation like La Fayette's. President and Congress had wished his return voyage to France to be a triumph, and had mobilized the best they had to that end. The U.S.S. *Brandywine* was commanded by a picked officer; and twenty-four midshipmen, representing the twenty-four States of the Union, were paraded on deck to salute their departing friend as he came aboard. The frigate was cluttered with parting gifts (those lost in the *Ohio* had been more than replaced). Irony of fate! The despiser of kings now travelled regally and the twenty-six days' crossing (almost a moon, as his Redskin friends would have said) completed the apotheosis.

The contrast evokes memories of two Napoleonic voyages: that of St. Helena, and also that which he had dreamed of, after Waterloo, and had been unable to accomplish, the voyage to America, tacit homage paid by the Emperor to Washington's friend, part-founder, at England's expense, of a new land to welcome exiles.

The Union's final gesture of homage surpassed all that had gone before. At the moment when, arrived in Le Havre, La Fayette was crossing the *Brandywine's* gangway, Gregory, the First Lieutenant, struck the Union flag with its twenty-four stars which was flying from the poop, and carried it to La Fayette, saying, "We could not entrust it to more glorious hands. May it always remind you of your alliance with the American nation."

During his absence, Charles X had succeeded Louis XVIII. Despite the reactionary policy which was to be expected of the

former *comte d'Artois*, his accession to the throne was accomplished without any disturbance. His first words as King being an undertaking to defend the Charter, gave the impression that he would continue his predecessor's policy, as did the message to the head of the reformed Church in which he said, "Be assured of my protection as you were of my brother's; all Frenchmen are equal in my sight; all have the same right to my love, my protection, and my benevolence."

The Villèle ministry, after some hesitation, remained in office. Censorship was withdrawn. There was a grand review of the National Guard. But this phase of euphoria did not last. An order dated December 2, 1824, retiring a number of officers who had served in the Imperial Army, irritated the Left, which promptly ceased praising the new King. Villèle's position became critical and the *Congrégation* (the term here means the Catholic Right) was becoming increasingly influential. By the following summer France appeared to be more divided than ever, so that whereas, on the banks of the Potomac, La Fayette had figured as a symbol of peace and union, on the banks of the Seine he was a signal for discord and civil war. The gendarmes waiting for him when he disembarked at Le Havre, far from being there to welcome him, were present to prevent the crowd from giving too warm a welcome to so troublesome a character. In this the police were, incidentally, by no means successful, but in Rouen, first stage in the General's journey, their measures were much more thorough: the moonlight serenade beneath the windows of La Fayette's room was interrupted by a cavalry charge and a number of people were wounded. La Fayette was thereafter informed that "excessive demonstrations" in his honour would no longer be permitted.¹

In France, however, it is sufficient to forbid a thing for the people to seize upon it and treat the Government's decree as a scrap of paper. As soon as the General began his journey to La Grange, there were demonstrations at several places along his route, particularly at Saint-Germain. On October 9 his lawns were trampled and the floors of his house soiled by the feet of three or four thousand of his partisans who had made their way from all the surrounding villages to welcome him home.

¹ Cf., Archives BB18. A6. 6381.

In the evening there were lanterns and fireworks: a small-scale 1790 *Fédération*. On his own estate—fate never spared him irony—he thus had the appearance of a lord-of-the-manor under the *ancien régime*. Victor de Broglie says he found him “fat, plump, fresh, joyful, showing no ill-effects of several months without sleep, or nearly so, months of chattering, writing, travelling and drinking, hard at it for ten hours out of every twenty-four . . . feeling, henceforth, the dignity of his years and position, and determined to make only such use of himself and his fortune as we can all approve of.”

Clearly, the General's close relations had, in respect to his past activities, an attitude which can only be called reserved; they might, no doubt they did, share his principles, but they by no means shared his illusions, and were little inclined to compromise themselves with revolutionaries. Let us mark the fact that de Broglie chiefly deplored the financial aspect of his uncle's behaviour. He was apt to lump the spongers by whom the General was surrounded, and conspirators, all together as equally undesirable, since they were all equally expensive to maintain. He notes: “There remains his own family. There are, permanently installed, the Tracys, the Laubespins, M. et Mme de Ségur, Philippe de Ségur, his three children and, since then, old Bentham has arrived, with some young people belonging to M. Thiers as bear-leaders. He is a little old man of not unhandsome appearance, but he seemed to me to be a little in his dotage.”

The General's room was dominated by a portrait of Kosciusko in uniform, and deputations of Polish patriots used La Grange as a meeting-place. The master of the house gave bed and board, successively or all together, to a positive army of proscribed foreigners, to whom he referred as exiled constitutionals—Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians. And even General Santander, driven overseas by Bolivar with whom, notwithstanding, La Fayette was in friendly correspondence. And in Paris Gilbert was to be seen dressing a salad at the house of the princess Belgiojoso while Thiers was turning omelettes over that gracious rebel's kitchen range.

From near and far hands reached into his pockets, and his prodigality was shamelessly abused. Despite Victor de Broglie's

optimism, he took part, with good, round crowns—his American gift—in every insurrection being brooded or hatched all over Europe and even beyond it—Haiti, Liberia, although, indeed, in the case of the remoter countries, his participation was of necessity confined to writing encouraging letters to their Presidents.

A large part of his copious correspondence was, needless to say, with the United States. For even there was a blemish—negro slavery, of which the right-wing press did not fail to remind the General in ironical terms when he boasted of the American system. That “anomaly” caused him grievous pain, but since he could not openly attack a government he loved and supported, on that point, he had to confine himself to discreet advice, or oblique pressure, or to “getting at” individuals. He made, moreover, a distinction between *domestic* slaves, whose lot did not greatly differ from that of European servants, and the poor wretches employed by the planters, who treated them more or less as the helots of pagan antiquity were treated.

His two friends, Jefferson and Adams, seemed to have prolonged their residence in this world simply in order to see him again. Less than a year after he parted from them they both died, and both on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. But his thoughts were drawn to the living, to younger men. There are letters from him to a Commodore Rogers pleading for Italian student volunteers in the battalion of the Cortès during the intervention in Spain, who had been made prisoners-of-war. La Fayette hoped that the United States might obtain, if not their freedom, at least some improvement in their lot. Other letters were written to the Presidents of the new South American republics, Argentina, Guatemala, and especially to Bolivar: and when he was reproached for his relations with the liberator of Peru and Colombia who, it was said, aspired to dictatorship, he replied, “I was deceived in Napoleon; but have not even my own purest intentions been made subjects for suspicious reproach?”

The General’s residence was constantly crowded with visitors belonging to the extreme left. The ministry of the moderate Villèle, restorer of the kingdom’s economy, was being attacked from one side by those who found it too liberal and from the

other by those who considered it reactionary: so much was this the case that, as Alfred Nettement says in his *Histoire de la Restauration* (Vol. VII, p. 641): "M. de Chateaubriand had reached the point of coming to an understanding with General de La Fayette, M. Hyde de Neuville with Benjamin Constant." In order to break out of this situation, Villèle "played his strongest and last card, that of a general election and making new peers. He lost, much less because of the faults he had been guilty of, than because he had been six years in office. It seemed that in clinging to his place he had taken everybody else's. We live in a country and an age when nothing which lasts is forgiven."

The left-wing candidates retained their seats everywhere, with La Fayette at their head, which raised the General to the zenith of optimism. Charles X saw things more clearly than the hot-heads of the two extreme parties. (Both Chateaubriand and La Fayette may very fairly be so called.) The King, a wiser man than he has all too often been accounted, suffered real grief at parting with Villèle and for some time still turned to him for advice. The new Right-Centre ministry was led by M. de Martignac and very soon ran into the same difficulties as its predecessor. And Charles X, who had, after all, none of Louis XVIII's liberal spirit, could not make up his mind to support it.

Meanwhile the left-wing opposition was weakened by three deaths, those of Girardin, General Foy and Manuel, all in their prime. At Manuel's funeral La Fayette made a speech which Mignet published through Sautelet's bookshop; a prosecution was the consequence, but as usual those chiefly responsible, Laffitte with whom Manuel had been living, and the General, were not molested.

The extradition of Gallotti, the Neapolitan revolutionary, called forth an angry protest from La Fayette, which he delivered from the tribune in the Chamber. At the risk of causing an international "incident" he accused the King of Naples' ambassador, Castelvila, of having, in 1799, at the time of the insurrection in Naples, had a number of Frenchmen massacred. This gave rise to a campaign in the Press: the Neapolitan diplomat took proceedings against the newspapers involved, and lost his case. This was a triumph for La Fayette who was

not, however, inclined to abuse it. With the Martignac ministry firmly installed, the president of the "*haute vente*" considered it wiser to give up systematic opposition: Charles X was aware of this and a sort of tacit armistice came into being between them.

At the end of August 1828 the King was on his way to Alsace and stayed a night in Meaux. He asked the prefect, "Are we not, here, in the marquis [*sic*] de La Fayette's division?" And when the official seemed surprised and even rather scandalized at the question, "The fact is I know him well. He has done our family services which I do not forget. We were born in the same year. We learned to ride together at the Versailles riding-school, and he was a member of my *bureau* in the Assembly of Notables."

On another occasion, when Royer-Collard was paying the King a visit, Charles asked after La Fayette, who was unwell at the time.

"I do him this justice, that he has been as faithful to his opinions as I have to mine. In 1787, during the Assembly of Notables, we had a very warm argument about the *capitaineries*. He wanted them suppressed, whereas I said I did not see why we should give poachers, who are all a bad lot, a free hand."

To which Royer-Collard, no doubt resuming La Fayette's own argument, replied, "Sire, the King is nevertheless aware that one may kill a rabbit which comes and eats one's wheat, and yet be a very worthy fellow."

There was a banquet of the electors at Meaux, at the hôtel Grand Monarque, where Louis XVI stayed on his way back from Varennes. The inexhaustible General made a political speech, throwing the commissioner of police, who knew not in what terms to report this "demonstration", into a terrible state. Moreover the "demonstrations" looked like spreading, for La Fayette was invited to speak in several *Départements*. In Vendée he preached action: "There is nothing worse than the lukewarm, and those whose purpose has, for forty years, been infirm have done our cause more harm than the White flags [Royalist reaction] at home and abroad. . . . If the Chamber wants liberal reforms, it has only to pass them. . . . There is no more eloquent argument than that of sitting down and standing up at the right moments."¹

¹ A method of voting: the "ayes" stand, the "noes" remain seated.—*Trans.*

He was able to discern a shade of liberal sympathy in the King, but saw that it was powerless to dominate Court circles. Formerly Gilbert's bugbear had been the aristocracy. Now it was the Holy Alliance, whose religious origin and pacific ends, assigned it by the tsar Alexander, he failed to understand, seeing it—and this is his excuse—as Metternich had deformed it, degrading it until it became merely a buttress for his exclusively Austrian policy.

Parliament having risen as a result of the order of August 8, La Fayette set out on a sort of pilgrimage through his native Auvergne, planning to make his way thereafter to Vizille, where one of his grand-daughters lived. But various opposition factions were not going to miss so splendid an opportunity: his whole route was lined by manifestations of enthusiasm towards him, which were, at the same time, stormy and threatening demonstrations against the government. There is also some reason to think that England, despite the fact that La Fayette had never liked that country, may have had a hand in encouraging these disturbances, raising up trouble for a government which was making preparations for the Algiers expedition.

The serious double mistake made by the liberal party was, first, the placing of a secondary matter, a matter simply of pride, that of the electoral census, high among its demands; secondly that of ceaselessly attacking the 1815 Treaties, thereby raising up all Europe against France. They would not admit that these Treaties, taking the date of their signature into account and the conditions under which they were signed, constituted not a defeat but a diplomatic victory for Talleyrand, a victory thereafter ably exploited by the *duc* de Richelieu, and by his successors at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. On July 6, 1827, France had been fully and equally associated with England and Russia in forcing Turkey to accept mediation in the matter of Greece. And when the Porte refused to bow to their decision, it was a French squadron which wiped out the Turkish fleet at Navarino. And when Ibrahim, son of the Egyptian pasha, and ally of the Turks, continued in occupation of the Morea, it was France who, despite reluctantly renounced English hostility to the intervention, was given the task of forcing him to evacuate that territory. The task was successfully accomplished. In short,

the Bourbon monarchy had become arbitrator of the Near Eastern question. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Charles X was, for a time, in a position analagous to that of Louis XIV at the Peace of Nijmegen, and that within ten years of the date when the last Allied Occupation troops had recrossed the Rhine.

When the nation gives ear to those who fish for the moon in troubled waters, and pays its leaders with ingratitude for benefits received, it is safe to forecast dark days soon to come.

It was said, after the event, that the Chamber of 1828, in trying to overthrow a government, found itself overturning a throne. For sixteen years France had been trying Parliamentary government *à l'anglaise*, and it was proving to be less and less viable every day: contrary to what took place at Westminster, the parties flatly refused to observe the rules of the game. It was a serious mistake to risk compromising France's splendid situation in international affairs, a mistake for which La Fayette must bear a considerable share of responsibility.

In Auvergne there were disturbances at every one of his halts—Clermont-Ferrand, Issoire, Brioude, and then Chavaniac, at which place he arrived surrounded by a positive cavalry corps of supporters; but he only stayed for a single day. He was at Puy on August 11, when he heard that the Polignac government had been formed. Polignac, Bourmont, La Bourdonnaie, the three most hated names in the kingdom. Saint-Marc Girardin, writing in the *Journal des Débats*, expressed the general feeling: "Coblentz, Waterloo, 1815—such are the three principles, the three characters of the Administration. Press it, wring it, and all that oozes from it are trouble, calamity and dangers."

The lanterns which illuminated the Haute-Loire capital on the night of August 11 were not lit in celebration of the new government. At the banquet given by the liberal leaders to La Fayette the toasts proposed were veritable declarations of war. This demonstration assumed an all the more threatening character from the fact that it occurred in Velay, cradle of the Polignac family, so that La Fayette, failing to discern to what extent it was spontaneous, and to what extent fomented, was

led to only one conclusion: France was up in arms, France wanted freedom; the cheers which greeted him seemed an echo of those which had welcomed him in America. The day of the messiah was at hand!

He went on to Dauphiné, to Privas where he received a delegation from the liberal youth, and then Grenoble. As he entered that city, was he thinking of the paradox implied in his reception? Thirteen years before the town had been acclaiming his enemy Napoleon; now the Bonapartists were his allies against the Bourbons. At the city gates, which had opened to receive Napoleon escaping from Elba, an old man, Rosset-Bresson, the General's contemporary, presented Gilbert with a crown of oak leaves made of silver, purchased by popular subscription.

Another banquet; two hundred guests including two opposition deputies, Faure and Augustin Périer, and the barristers Sauzet and Mérilhou. Camille Tesseyre proposed a toast: "It was here that the first flag of liberty was flown, the first signal of equality. Here, if need be, a sheet anchor will be found." At Vizille, an historic town since the Assembly of the Estates of Dauphiné, the reception and entertainment of La Fayette took on a strong character of anti-ministerial protest. Voiron, La Tour du Pin, Bourgoin, mobilized all their resources in the General's honour. His entry into Vienne, on December 4, was particularly triumphal. He was on horseback, escorted by one hundred and fifty young men, and followed by a dense crowd. Ceaselessly he preached resistance. At Lyon, says Bardoux, his reception "was almost royal". He was met at the *Département* boundary by five hundred mounted men and a thousand on foot, who composed his escort. The liberal Dr Prunelle delivered an address, to which La Fayette replied. On September 6, the hero's seventy-second birthday, there was a visit to *l'île Barbe* in a flotilla of boats dressed with flags and bunting. At the banquet on the following day he made a direct attack against Polignac:

Will they dare, by means simply of Orders, to "vitiate" [*sic*] the elections, and govern illegally? . . .

The French nation knows its rights and will know how to defend them.

Finally he made his way back to La Grange by short stages, through a series of demonstrations which continued to delight him; "for", as Alfred Nettetment rightly says, "he was more in love with the trappings of power, than with power itself".

While the rôle of freemasonry in 1789 may be disputable, it is generally admitted that the revolution of 1830 was planned by the secret societies, of which the principal ones were the society calling itself *Aide-toi le ciel t'aidera* (*Help thyself and Heaven will help thee*), and an association formed in Brittany to refuse to pay taxes, whose plan was published in the *Journal du Commerce* in extremely violent terms.

La Fayette was urging Paris landlords to form themselves, likewise, into an association to carry on the struggle. There is nothing surprising in that, coming from him; but what does seem extraordinary is that he should have been followed by men whose whole interest lay in defending public order. The legend of the *Congrégation*, the war declared by freemasonry against religion, the absurd fear of a return to the privileges of the *ancien régime*, such were the reasons—unreasonable enough—for this whole movement.

There was, to be sure, a measure of contributory clumsiness on the government's part. It would no doubt have been better to put a damper on certain manifestations which had the air of dragging religion into politics, and which the liberals affected to regard as provocative. The idea of a Christian monarchy, a thousand-year-old French tradition, had become obnoxious to the whole of that party which had been won over by the eighteenth-century *philosophes*. Besides, it seems that La Fayette was particularly afraid of a return of the system of privileges, with former *émigrés*, whose chief and symbol the *duc* de Polignac seemed to be, predominating.

Confronted by such a prospect he did not hesitate to urge even armed resistance. Not in so many words, to be sure—there had always been a certain prudence in the man—but his intention was none the less clear and in conformity with what he told his friends: "Only the nation's energy can frustrate the audacious conspiracy of counter-revolution." If he did not actually stand up as leader of the opposition, he certainly accepted responsibility for it. He was the founder of Guizot's

career, although he held Guizot to be "more monarchical (*monarchique*) and less of a democrat" than himself; hopeful, nevertheless, of making an effective opposition leader of him. In this purpose he had another and not less powerful motive: Guizot was to "supervise and manage the translation of the important Washington correspondence". This choice, as we shall see, was to be fatal to Charles X.

The King opened Parliament on March 22. His speech had, as was customary, been submitted to his ministers for their approval, but when delivering it he added a peroration of his own, which he deliberately raised his voice to read:

Should blameworthy manœuvres raise up difficulties for my government which I am unable to foresee, I shall find strength to overcome them in my resolve to maintain public peace, in the just confidence of the French people and in the love which they have always shown for their King.

The opposition at once picked up this gauntlet and it was Guizot who, in collaboration with Étienne, drew up the document which was signed by 221 opposition deputies, and which contained the decisive phrase: "The Charter . . . makes a permanent concurrence between your government's political opinions and the wishes of your people the indispensable condition for the regular conduct of public business. Sire, our loyalty, our devotion, condemn us to inform you that this concurrence does not exist!"

The city of Paris gave the two hundred and twenty-one deputies a banquet in a room decorated with two hundred and twenty-one crowns joined together by garlands of flowers. A gold medal was struck in their honour and the left-wing Press was calling them the saviours of their country. This was sufficient to persuade the Polignac ministry to dissolve Parliament on the following May 16, which Article 14 of the Charter enabled them to do; the new elections were to take place between June 23 and 25.

On May 31 the *duc* d'Orléans gave a party at his Palais-Royal residence. The King was invited and went, but encountered the leaders of the opposition and a hostile crowd. There were insults and abusive cries. The party ended with a bonfire fed with the

garden furniture—and with Salvandy's comment, "A very Neapolitan *fête*. They're dancing on a volcano."

A volcano which was about to erupt. La Fayette was returned to the Chamber by Meaux with 264 votes against 72, and the entire opposition with him. On July 21, in the morning, Odilon Barrot, Mathieu Dumas and a few others foregathered at the General's house: they were discussing the possible accession of the *duc d'Orléans*. In the course of the discussion the United States Minister arrived. La Fayette went to meet him.

What will our American friends say if they hear that we have proclaimed a republic?

The reply was icy:

They will say that the French have thrown away forty years of experience.

Thus, until the very end of his career, such "words of wisdom" as he heard came to La Fayette from "his American friends". But no peaceful solution was any longer possible as between King and Parliament. While the French army on July 5 was marching into Algiers, Charles X was working with his ministers at the Orders which the *Moniteur* was to publish on the 26th. Suppression of the freedom of the Press, dissolution of the newly elected Chamber, and a change in the electoral system.

Upon hearing which news La Fayette, who was at La Grange, immediately set out for Paris.

Chapter 26



JULY 1830

LA FAYETTE reached the city *barrières* in the afternoon of the 27th. At the exact moment when the crowd and the *Garde Royale* were exchanging their first shots. On the 28th he wrote a new bulletin to his children (however disturbed the day, he always found time to write a few letters) which contained, in brief, the classic picture of Paris in revolt which he knew so well: workmen and students mingling, barricades, ambushes, factories deserted, shops closed. "All Bourbon armorial bearings," he wrote, "even those of the Orléans branch, have been pulled down or defaced. The deputies regard the Chamber as not dissolved, and the social pact as having been broken. The King is at Saint-Cloud."

On the night of the 27th the city was in a state of siege. To reach his house La Fayette was forced to cross some of the barricades. The people did not dare to cheer him for fear of pointing him out to the Government troops. Or perhaps he was not recognized. A sentry stopped him with his bayonet. The corporal commanding the squad arrested him and those with him, calling them *clampins*.¹ In the improvised guard-room there were explanations. "Come and embrace me!" cried he who was sometimes called "*Père Biseur*". Followed a general huddle, everyone wishing to share in the *accolade*: thereafter the citizen-soldiers fell in at attention to be inspected!

On the afternoon of the 28th the insurrectionists seized the Hôtel de Ville and Notre-Dame and ran up the tricolour flag. Excitement was at its height; the troops were offering little or no resistance as the people poured through the streets looting armourers' shops under the tolerant eyes of their proprietors. A delegation from the *École polytechnique*, in revolt against its

¹ A lazy, loafing, oafish raw recruit.—*Trans.*

commander, presented itself at La Fayette's house, another at Laffitte's, and yet another at Casimir Périer's.

Thiers, active on behalf of the *duc d'Orléans*, was afraid of being overrun by a revolution in which republicans and Bonapartists might unite—the end towards which the secret societies and the Carbonari "*ventes*" had been working for fifteen years.

To deal with this situation Polignac could count on twenty-eight thousand soldiers—such, at least, was the figure on paper. But a roll-call gave a rather different result, eight thousand—to the stupefaction of Marshal Marmont, placed in command of this skeleton army. The *ministre du roi* was particularly afraid of La Fayette and had Marmont sign a warrant for his arrest. The General appeared to be the focus of the whole movement, he might be ready to organize it and place himself at its head.

There was a meeting at Laffitte's, then another at Casimir Périer's, with thirty-two deputies, all that remained in Paris, and a third, with the same protagonists, at the house of Audry de Puyraveau who, in the course of the evening, also sent for the representatives of the Paris left-wing Press. Meanwhile the insurgents had consolidated their hold on the Hôtel de Ville.

So that once again the Hero of Two Worlds unquestionably held the fate of France in his hands for a few hours. In the course of various conferences he proclaimed the legal authority politically bankrupt and called for a provisional government. He was ready to respond in person to the people's call and was awaiting his colleagues' approval: but too many hours had already been wasted in talk, and he told them, "If you have not made up your mind by this time tomorrow, I shall resume my freedom of action."

It looked like being 1789 and '92 all over again, but with the play recast. And Casimir Périer insisted—"no blood-letting".

A young man named Mauguin gave La Fayette his support in words which were almost identical with La Rochefoucauld's to Louis XVI on July 14:

"This is a revolution, not a riot. Would you lead it? Begin by understanding it. Do you want it to find other leaders? Then hesitate. You have to choose between the people and the

Garde Royale. Between the people and its enemies there is room only for cowards, who will soon be repudiated by both sides. Declare for the revolution, or the revolution will take place without you and against you."

A diatribe which did not pass without rousing some protests.

The deputies of the dissolved Chamber were anxious that their authority continue lawful. To this end they had drawn up a plan which was read aloud by Guizot. The Chamber declared for the King, but against that violence which prevented them from advising the government in their rôle as the nation's representatives. This aroused the indignation of the republicans, whose spokesman was La Fayette. In his view the King had broken compact by his illegal orders and had caused the righteously revolting populace to be massacred by his soldiery. "When the government violates the people's rights. . . ." We know the formula.

On the way to Audry de Puyraveau's with Jules de Lasteyrie and Carbonnel the General had to clamber, not without difficulty, over several barricades. The vital decision, which was to be made on the following morning at Laffitte's, was planned at this meeting: the deputies were to adhere to the insurrection; the tricolour flag was to be adopted; and the King and his ministers declared enemies of the people.

On the way back to his own house La Fayette was recognized by the insurgents, his way was made easy and he was cheered; it was from him they expected the Republic. The General shook the hands which were offered him, smiled, but gave no undertaking, and regained his house without knowing that he had been appointed commander of the resuscitated National Guard.

It was not until noon on the 29th that the definitive discussions took place. This was in Laffitte's house and Laffitte presided. The gathering was a numerous one, including all the left-wing leaders, the men of political consequence whose names were to fill the period 1830-1848: the two Arago brothers, Odilon Barrot, Guizot, Garnier-Pagès, Bertin de Vaux, Casimir Périer, Carbonnel, Sebastiani, Mignet, Villemain.

La Fayette addressed them:

"You will have no difficulty in believing me when I tell you

that this morning I received the first news of my appointment as commander of the National Guard. It is apparent to me that it is the will of a large number of citizens that I should accept, not as a deputy, but as a [private] individual, the mission which has been offered me. I am bound to submit for your consideration the motives which seem such as to cause me to accept: a veteran of 1789 may be of some service in our present grave circumstances. Attacked upon all sides, we are bound to defend ourselves."

At this point the General was interrupted by a courier with the news that the Louvre had been taken, after which he finished his speech.

"I am invited to assume responsibility for organizing our defence. I understand that similar proposals have been made to my colleague and friend M. de Laborde. . . . On all sides I am asked for instructions, for orders. My answers are awaited. Do you think that in the face of the dangers threatening us a passive rôle would accord with my past life and present situation? No. My conduct at seventy-three years of age shall be what it was at thirty-two. It is important, I feel, that the Chamber should reserve its decision as to my appointment, but my own duty as a citizen prescribes that I should respond to public confidence and devote myself to the common defence."

Guizot insisted that La Fayette must accept; the safety of Paris was in his hands. Bertin de Vaux supported him, and turning to the General, said,

"Although we cannot have with us the virtuous Mayor of Paris of 1789, we can congratulate ourselves on having won the illustrious chief of the National Guard to our side."

Laffitte: In all the opinions which have been expressed I believe I can perceive a unanimous wish. That is, that a Paris municipal committee be formed to supervise the provisioning of the capital.

This was put to the vote and carried unanimously. La Fayette was asked to designate the five committee members.

La Fayette: It is important, for the firmer erection of a scaffolding for the building of a provisional government, that the municipal committee be nominated by the Chamber.

Bertin de Vaux: There is the greatest excitement outside.

General La Fayette's name is being spoken on all sides and it is important that the honourable General should go and show himself to the citizens.

Laffitte: General La Fayette accepts the command of the National Guard which has just been conferred on him by a number of notable citizens gathered together in the interests of the capital's defence.

"Thus," says Thureau-Dangin, "pushed rather than followed, he resumed his old uniform, symbol of those illusions which still remained mistress of his mind." A ballot to decide the municipal commissioners led to the committee being composed of Laffitte, Casimir Périer, Lobau, Schonen and Audry de Puyraveau.

The 29th and 30th of July brought a shower of Gilbert's orders of the day; to do him justice, they were all very short. The last reopened the Paris *barrières* when the fighting was barely over. A note from him to an unknown correspondent bears witness that "The people of Paris covered themselves with glory, and when I say the people I mean what are called the lowest classes of society which, this time, were the highest; for the courage, intelligence, devotion and virtue of the people of Paris have been admirable. . . ."

Admirable or no, the Paris *faubourgs* had once again imposed a revolution on France.

Five Orders, dated July 26, had started the rising. Five others were now to attempt, albeit in vain, to make it unnecessary. The first revoked those of the 26th. The second summoned both Houses of Parliament to meet on August 30. The third announced the appointment of the *duc* de Mortemart as President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs. The fourth appointed General Gérard as Secretary of State for War. The fifth appointed Casimir Périer Secretary of State for Finance.

The reading of these orders during a session which had started in Laffitte's house during the morning of the 30th, and was resumed at noon in the Chamber, caused considerable excitement. Benjamin Constant, without committing himself on the dynastic question, stated, "that it would be altogether too easy for a king to be able to have his people mowed down and then to get off by saying: nothing has happened. Give us

back the ten thousand citizens whose throats your satellites have cut! It is not to the dismissal of ministers that I attach importance. We should know how to deal with them. It is to the organization of the National Guards."

After a great deal of talking Dupin came to the point of the situation by concluding a speech, "You are without a government; you need a government."

M. de Salverte considered that "the deputies owe General La Fayette a precise answer".

M. de Kératry: If you decide nothing today I shall not return tomorrow.

While the debate continued, La Fayette had taken the same road as he had taken forty years before—the road to the Hôtel de Ville. Arago was sporting a tricolour cockade. "Not yet," the General murmured, as he passed him, by which, no doubt, he meant "not before me". That, however, was not to be long. In the *rue aux Fers* a shower of tricolour ribbons floated down on to the General's party; he immediately made a gesture of accepting the colours, amidst the plaudits of the crowd. Sarrans, his aide-de-camp, notes that in the *place de Grève* "the crowd paid homage to La Fayette for having pressed some wounded to his heart". The manner of 1830 had nothing to learn from 1790.

At the Hôtel de Ville, where the black flag of anarchy had been run up, he was awaited by one General Dubourg, whose uniform had apparently come from an old-clothes dealer, and a Colonel Zimmer who had already sketched in a general staff. Officers with the ink still wet on their commissions pressed forward officiously to guide La Fayette through the labyrinth of corridors. "Let me alone," he said smiling, "I know my way."

Immediately, at his orders, the *décor* of 1789 was being fetched out of the attics. Black flags, Dubourg, Zimmer and company vanished. Lamartine says it was an Imperialist, Colonel Dumoulin, formerly one of Napoleon's aides-de-camp, who hung out the three colours from the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville. It is of small consequence: in the matter of the tricolour La Fayette was Bonaparte's senior.

The General presided over the committee nominated by the deputies in the *Salle de la Liberté*. The committee received Sémonville, d'Argout and Vitrolles, back from Saint-Cloud to announce that they had persuaded Charles to withdraw the Orders. (See above.) La Fayette was absent from the room for a moment, but Schonen, as his spokesman, interrupted them,

"Too late! The throne of Charles X has collapsed in blood."

Mauguin asked the commissioners whether they had written authority.

"We have only his word."

"In that case, withdraw," Audry de Puyraveau demanded, "or I will call in the people!"

Discouraged, Sémonville left the room, while Casimir Périer, speaking low, was advising d'Argout to talk to Laffitte's committee: they might be more tractable than the "Fayettists". However, he received the same answer. Even the most moderate dare not go against the victors who, at the tops of their voices, were yelling, "No more Bourbons!"

Warned of what was happening, La Fayette had returned to the room and brought Sémonville back. At the beginning of the Revolution both of them had been in much the same situation as they were today. The General heard the King's commissioner expound his mission again. After which he said,

"But did you at least, my old comrade, think of ensuring the tricolour cockade for us? For we patriots really must not leave here without gaining some sort of point."

Sémonville was well aware that Charles would never consent to that.

"I did not think of it. But what would you do with that revolutionary rag?"

"Make a revolution," La Fayette replied. "Without it we shall have made nothing but a riot."

Discomfited, the three messengers from Saint-Cloud persuaded de Mortemart to try what he could do himself. A wretched negotiator! The heat was torrid, and he was drenched in sweat and carried his coat on his arm. From the moment he passed the outposts he saw nothing but tricolour flags and heard nothing but yells of "Down with the Bourbons!"

Why, then, did not La Fayette who, for a brief while, could have done exactly as he pleased, proclaim a republic?

The answer is writ large in all his past. It was not for him to decide the form of government, it was for the nation, through its elected representatives. Proclaimed President by the Paris mob, what would he have been? That of which he had the utmost horror: a dictator. Washington had derived his authority from the Congress, not from the insurgent masses. A Bonaparte can engineer a *coup d'état*, an 18 brumaire; can crown himself with his own hands and a crown blessed by the Pope. A La Fayette cannot, on pain of being untrue to himself.

If he did not seize his chance it was because he did not want to. "The people are not sufficiently educated to uphold a republic." He had been saying that as early as 1790 and had given the nation twenty-five years to acquire the necessary education. Now he perceived that it had not been enough. When there had been talk of king-making he had written to Laffitte not to be in too much of a hurry. He was no more positive when it was a question of making a republic.

He who hesitates is lost. Louis-Philippe (for he was soon to be so called) did not hesitate: he was waiting, which is not quite the same thing. He was in hiding at Le Raincy, in a summer-house in the middle of his park. Lamartine says he was establishing a "material alibi"; but he was surrounded by a group of friends who kept him informed and were ready to defend him if need be. Chateaubriand thought that the prince knew of the July Orders in advance and had congratulated himself on the King's blunder. His judgment is severe: "Going by Louis-Philippe's character," he wrote, "it must be presumed that he resolved on nothing, and that his political timidity, shut up within his falseness, waited on events as a spider waits for the fly to be caught in its web. He let time and circumstances do his conspiring for him; himself, he conspired only in his wishes, of which it is probable that he was afraid. . . ."

He "waited on events". The principal "event" was Thiers, author of an anonymous handbill pasted up everywhere as soon as the insurgents were in control of Paris. It was cleverly written: it suggested that a republic would provoke a dangerous hostility abroad. The Revolution, Jemmapes, the citizen-king

(evoked before the event), the tricolour flag, all the idols of the hour were featured. "The *duc d'Orléans* does not declare himself; he awaits your vote; let us proclaim that vote and he will accept the Charter as we have understood and wanted it. He will receive his crown at the hands of the French people. . . ." This eloquence had an air of prophecy.

What followed is familiar: Thiers calling upon Mme Adélaïde to appeal to her brother, which she did by sending Anatole de Montesquieu to Le Raincy to beg the prince "to prevent a republic by dedicating himself to the crown", while his friends were all busy in his interest. Thiers, Mignet and several others took part in a secret meeting at the Lointier restaurant at which certain former Carbonari called for open consultation of the people. The prince's nocturnal return to Paris, after once turning back, and his disappearance into his Palais-Royal, where, avoiding his own bedroom, he retired to the attics and slept in one of the servant's beds.

In the course of the very long meeting which, having started at Laffitte's, continued in the Chamber, Broglie and Dupin had spoken of the dangers of a republic. Moreover, nobody wanted it. But apart from that, every possible solution found someone to speak for it: Orléans, Angoulême, Henri V and even Charles X, whose partisans were, indeed, still the most numerous. But the left-wing extremists were so violently against Charles that La Fayette had to conceal the King's emissary, Collin de Sussy, in the office where the Municipal Committee was in session, when he arrived from Rambouillet with the new orders and the ephemeral appointment of M. de Mortemart.

"You see," La Fayette told him, in the midst of the tumult provoked by the reading of the papers de Sussy had brought from the King, "you will have to resign yourself [to the facts]. The Bourbons are finished."

Sussy tried one more effort: he proposed that the General should himself meet and talk with Mortemart at the Luxembourg. La Fayette refused: "The people themselves revoked the Orders during the Three Days. As a delegate of the people I want nothing to do with the representative of the fallen monarchy."

Sussy met with the same want of success in the Chamber

where he read the decrees to the deputies. Odilon Barrot, in uniform as an officer of the National Guard, placed on the *bureau* a letter in which La Fayette reminded the deputies of the principle of the people's sovereignty, of the aim of the revolution which had just been accomplished, and of the guarantees which should be promulgated before any other government measures were taken. There were still enough royalists in the Assembly to alarm Laffitte; he sent to warn the secretary of the Municipal Committee that the deputies were inclined to deliberate without hearing the Municipal Committee's views. As a result, the legitimists retreated and the *duc* d'Orléans was proclaimed Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom.

The night which followed was full of perplexity. While La Fayette was hesitating to play the part of a Washington to its conclusion, the *duc* d'Orléans was still temporizing on the threshold of usurpation. Day had not dawned when he summoned Mortemart to the Palais-Royal. Despite the hour there was a crowd beneath his windows, shouting, "Long live the *duc* d'Orléans!"

"You hear that, they are choosing me. No, no, I will let myself be killed rather than accept the crown."

And he handed Mortemart a letter addressed to Charles to assure him of his loyalty. He was playing on two stages, but, on the whole, when La Fayette had, upon hearing the yells of the mob, declared that the Bourbons were finished, he was a good deal ahead of the principal interested party. He had run ahead of events—the better to follow them.

The reinstating of the National Guard was, in any event, an obstacle to the establishment of a republic. As Chateaubriand said, "M. de La Fayette failed to perceive that in dreaming of a republic he had armed three million gendarmes against it." There were hot-heads—very young ones—nevertheless burning to take action. There was talk of opening a volley of fire on the *duc* d'Orléans as he left the Palais-Royal. Someone having pointed out that the prince would not be alone and that Benjamin Constant would be shot down at his side, not to mention Pujol and Laffitte, the plan was given up. Others talked only of arresting him and putting him on board a ship

at Cherbourg. Chateaubriand, to whom we owe this sketch of the plotting, must have regretted that it went no further; for had it succeeded the world might have enjoyed the spectacle of Charles X and Louis-Philippe united on their way to exile in the same ship.

Chapter 27



THE LAST TEMPTATION OF MONSIEUR DE LA FAYETTE

ON the evening of July 30 a fairly numerous group of young men arrived at the Hôtel de Ville. They asked the General to preside over a *provisional* Government, a solution in accord with the principles which he had always professed, since in theory it left the nation free to choose its own form of government. Gilbert's friends redoubled their persuasions, while his own family tried to restrain him from yielding to this temptation. At the moment when, however, he was ready to yield, his grandson Charles de Rémusat intervened: his manœuvre was carried out in three movements.

"No middle way: the monarchy with the *duc* d'Orléans or the republic with you."

La Fayette remained silent.

"Do you wish to be President of the Republic?"

"No, certainly not."

"Well, then! You must help us to put the *duc* d'Orléans on the throne."

There was no answer, but Rémusat nevertheless won his point, for Gilbert was realizing more and more clearly every hour that France was not ready for a republic. Delegates from the *Départements* were arriving in Paris: his popularity in the provinces was at its zenith, they all wanted to shake his hand and he received them effusively, but it was clear that they were against the change he had in mind. He realized that the provinces wanted the constitutional monarchy for which he had fought so long, and demanded nothing better, although Paris now seemed inclined to reject it. The important thing, then, was to retain authority for the Chamber of Deputies, and let the nation's representatives speak. He told the delegates:

"In three days the Chamber will be in regular session, in accordance with the mandate of its constituents. . . . Meanwhile, the nation knows that the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom was one of the young patriots of 1789, one of the first generals to bear the tricolour flag to victory."

A gloss on Thiers' handbill; still, the duel between Paris and the rest of France was not over. To enable fate to make up her mind, the agreement of Paris was required, at least during a brief time: l'Hôtel de Ville—before the Tuileries.

Preceded by a lame drummer beating on a broken drum, the deputies made their way to the Palais-Royal, Laffitte at their head in a sedan-chair, a sprain preventing him from walking. The *duc* d'Orléans embraced the banker (Laffitte) and showed himself with him on the balcony, while General Gérard, at the prince's orders, set off to announce to La Fayette that the *duc* d'Orléans would call on him. They went in procession through the streets—Égalité's son leading on horseback, followed by the deputies on foot and by Benjamin Constant, sick, in a sedan-chair, like Laffitte—a singular spectacle out of the *ancien régime*. The Paris mob was, on the whole, more *Fayette*ist than *Orléanist*; shouts of "*Vive La Fayette!*" predominated over those of "*Vive le duc d'Orléans!*" A bill, pasted up not far from the Hôtel de Ville, caught the prince's eye: it called him Capet, Bourbon, and he paled as if it were the head of Medusa. It required the manner of his reception, by La Fayette surrounded by pupils of the *École Polytechnique* at the foot of the steps to the Hôtel de Ville, to restore the assurance of the head of the cadet branch of the Bourbon family.

They went up together into the crowded rooms where there were "diverse reactions" and, as La Fayette noted, "some rather hard words against the *duc* d'Orléans."

The Duke: Gentlemen, a former National Guard has come to visit his former general.

Viennet read the Chamber's manifesto, which was greeted somewhat coldly.

The Duke: I promise to dedicate myself to France's happiness.

At which point, sudden reappearance of the egregious General Dubourg in his reach-me-down uniform, declaring:

"I like to believe that you will not break your promises; but should you do so we shall know how to make you keep them."

The Duke (disconcerted): Monsieur, I am sincere (*honnête*).

La Fayette swept the importunate general aside and completed the gesture by holding out his hand to the prince. He presented him with a tricolour flag, drew him towards a window and embraced him. Unanimous cheers—the prince's opponents did not feel themselves numerous enough to protest. Thus, whereas La Fayette's first appearance on a balcony had brought down one monarchy, his last erected another.

It was then the turn of the chief of the National Guard to go to the Palais-Royal, to pay an official visit to Louis-Philippe. Their conversation was decisive:

La Fayette: You are aware that I am a republican and that I regard the constitution of the United States as the most perfect which has ever existed.

The Duke: I think as you do: it is impossible to have spent two years in America and not to be of that opinion. But do you think in the present condition of France and public opinion, that it would suit us to adopt it?

La Fayette: No; what the French people need today is a popular throne surrounded by republican institutions, but altogether republican.

The Duke: That is exactly as I understand the matter.

La Fayette repeated what had been said to those present. It was not he, it seems, but Odilon Barrot, who said, "Here we have the best of republics"; and probably the actual form of words was "That is as near to a republic as we have been able to get." (*Voilà ce que nous avons pu faire de plus républicain.*) Chateaubriand was to write: "La Fayette had Louis XVI beheaded" (an obvious calumny) "only, as a good republican, to put the crown on the *duc d'Orléans'* head." But what does emerge quite clearly from all contemporary records, and especially from the account left by Sarrans, his aide-de-camp at the time, is that La Fayette's part was a very important one, if not, indeed, vital and that while he may not have been alone responsible for the deposition of Charles X, it was certainly he who vested Louis-Philippe with the monarchy, by exploiting

his own popularity as an American general and commander of the National Guard. In doing so he sacrificed both the republic and his own presidency.

Here we should note two "soundings", as it were, which came to him from opposite directions—one from the Bonapartists, the other from the legitimists. The *comte* de Survilliers, that is to say Joseph Bonaparte, ex-King of Spain, wrote to La Fayette in support of his nephew, with whom he had kept in friendly touch. But the *duc* de Reichstadt was, in the eyes of many, half a German; worse, an Austrian (evocative of revolutionary memories—the *Austrian*—Marie-Antoinette—the beheaded traitress) the General did not reply until November 26, when he wrote refusing. The young man who, as a child, was King of Rome was never to see the Tuileries again.

The other initiative came from the legitimists and it proposed no less than this: that the former prisoner of Olmütz should become Regent of the Kingdom during the minority of Henri V. So that, whatever may have been the "Whites' " future plans, La Fayette's prestige was still such that it was to him they turned for fulfilment of their chimerical hopes of another, but peaceful, restoration: unsuccessfully, needless to say.

As if to make 1830 resemble 1789 as closely as possible, a *sortie* from Paris recalled the October expedition to Versailles. But this time it was not to bring the King back to Paris, but to drive him out of his kingdom.

Charles had withdrawn to Rambouillet. He still had at his disposal forces sufficient to deal with the whole Paris National Guard, and certainly with a mob like that of the October Days: twelve thousand men, including three crack cavalry regiments and forty cannon.

La Fayette, who did not yet know what his own forces amounted to, sent out an advance guard on July 30 to watch the movements of this army and, at the same time, to demand the crown jewels. This advance guard—"despite", as La Fayette wrote, "its parliamentary mission"—was fired on by a platoon of *Suisses*, a ball killing Colonel Poque's horse under him and wounding the colonel in the foot. The Parisian "Volunteers" were commanded by General Pajol, with George Lafayette

and Colonel Jacqueminot as aides-de-camp. Sarrans has left an account of the number of omnibuses, fiacres, cabriolets and all kinds of carriages and carts which transported these people to Rambouillet after the General had inspected them in the Champs-Élysées. "The most singular and interesting of armies," he comments, a comment which the historian Thureau-Dangin rectified to, "a grotesque and hideous army".

In his admirable book on Henri V, Pierre de Luz has described this march, which resulted in the defrauding of Charles X to an even greater extent than that of 1789 had cheated Louis XVI. Charles had abdicated on August 2 in favour of his grandson, the *duc* de Bordeaux, whom he entrusted to the *duc* d'Orléans; he appointed that prince Lieutenant-General of the Realm, at the same time as (and in the hope of doing so before) the Chamber. The deposed King asked the *duc* d'Orléans, in his capacity as Lieutenant-General, for commissioners to escort him to Cherbourg, where he was to embark. Three were sent: Schonen, La Fayette's friend, Odilon Barrot and Marshal Maison. When Charles declared that he would not move before the conditions he had made clear to the *duc* d'Orléans were fulfilled, Barrot insisted that they must leave at once. Maison went even further:

"There are eighty thousand armed men following behind us." (There were not twenty thousand, and those were soldiers in name only.)

Charles (taking Maison aside): Monsieur le Maréchal, is what you have just told me the exact truth?

Maison (somewhat troubled): Sire, I have not counted them, but it is a large body, and very wrought up.

There could be no doubting the word of a *Maréchal* of France! Nevertheless it seems that the King still hesitated to take the scarecrow erected by La Fayette seriously, and that he consulted one of his cronies, possibly the *duc* de Duras, who told him:

Nothing would be easier than to disperse these people, but all you would be doing by that is render a great service to the new government which will be set up, the republic or the *duc* d'Orléans. Since they can now expect nothing from you, they'll turn on

the new government, which will, once again, have them to reckon with.¹

The most blameworthy in this business, after La Fayette, was Marshal Maison who, deliberately or otherwise, misled the King. As for La Fayette, he had done far more than on the "journée" of October 5; then, under constraint, he had joined the rioters for the purpose of protecting the royal family; but this time he had unleashed his rabble army against Rambouillet with the firm intention of having done with the Bourbons.

And it was, in fact, the *coup de grâce*. Charles X gave up the struggle and retired, in short stages, towards the coast, at each stage receiving the homage of those who remained faithful to him, like tears shed upon a grave.

La Fayette was keenly aware that despite his victory the future remained as uncertain as ever. The *accolade* which the *duc d'Orléans* had received did not suffice completely to quieten that prince's conscience, and for another seven days he still shilly-shallied. He was Lieutenant-General of the Realm for both Henri V and the Chamber of Deputies: he was a functionary with two masters who were sworn enemies. Which was he to obey? Difficult negotiations at last led to the following conclusion: the people would summon the duke to reign, which meant the Divine Right was to be replaced by contractual right; the new King would take the name of Louis-Philippe I and not that of Philippe VII. (La Fayette had warmly insisted on setting aside a designation which had a mediaeval smack to it.) The rift in the institution of monarchy was made.

"A bastard solution", "a mongrel government"—such disobliging epithets were not wanting upon the accession of La Fayette's liberal anointed. Béranger at least showed himself satisfied, however, although more from hatred of the Bourbons than from Orléanist convictions. In his *Vie de Charles X mêlée de couplets*,² after having poured out his bile on the King, whom he reproaches with his passion for hunting:

*C'est par le gibier qu'on commence,
C'est par le peuple qu'on finit. . . .*

¹ Dr. Poumiès de la Siboutie. *Souvenirs d'un médecin de Paris.*

² Archives, L 6⁴⁰, 32.

(It's with game that you start,
It's with the people that you finish. . . .)

he concludes.

*O Lafayette, héros, cher à la France,
Que de respects méritent tes exploits!
Qui par tes soins et par ta vigilance
Nous possédons le plus juste des rois.¹*

Chateaubriand prophesied: "This will last fifteen years, thereafter—the deluge. Our nephews will witness a fine uproar." An uproar of which he himself, a dying man, was to hear the sinister echoes in June 1848.

Meanwhile, the July crisis caused much rejoicing in London and Washington, but not of the same kind. England greeted the fall of the Bourbons as that of the conquerors of Algiers, and opponents of long standing. The United States acclaimed a new dawn of Liberty, eclipsed in France for thirty years. Their ambassador, Mr Rives, had assured La Fayette that his adherence to the new monarch would be approved in America. In particular they acclaimed La Fayette at the head of his resuscitated National Guard. Floods of congratulatory messages crossed the Atlantic, while, on its western shore, tricolour flags flapped from every flagstaff and delegations loaded with gifts embarked for France. This feeling was not confined to the United States, nor even to North America. All the South joined in—Colombia, Argentina, Chile— There were to be demonstrations in India—on the very banks of the Ganges men cried "Vive La Fayette!"—at least, the explorer Jacquemont, who was in Delhi, was invited to a banquet in celebration by the English and Indian authorities, exceptionally of one mind for the occasion.

As for Europe, there is nothing surprising in the fact that the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy should have been a signal for general excitement in nations which were oppressed, or proclaimed themselves to be so. There was a wide community

¹ La Fayette hero dear to France
What honour should thine exploits bring!
Since thou by care and vigilance
Hast given us the justest King!

of many feelings, among which that of the masonic brotherhood should not be overlooked.

In fact it was a masonic (in the widest sense of that word, as applied to all secret societies) revolution which had driven Charles X into exile. This fact is universally admitted today, even by those who deny masonic activity in 1789. The proofs are numerous, but we need mention only one, which concerns La Fayette: a feast (*fête*) was given on October 10, 1830; its programme is not wanting in savour—"Masonic and patriotic feast given in honour of the most Illustrious Brother General La Fayette, citizen of Two Worlds and patriarch of Liberty, by the Brothers of the two rites, under the presidency [chairmanship?] of the Very Illustrious Brother and *Duc de Choiseul*." (Masonry was still very aristocratic, at least in the higher grades: the other president was the *comte* Alexandre de Laborde, and the grand supervisor the *comte* Muraire-Bouilly.) "Speech by the president—speeches by the Brother orators—Piece of architecture in verse. [*Morceau d'architecture en vers*" (sic).] Suspension of work to pass to the work of banqueting. [*"Suspension des travaux pour passer à ceux du banquet"* (resic).] Price of banquet (tickets) 20 francs. . . . Subscribers only will be admitted to the session. Their number is limited to 330. No Brother may enter without showing his card [ticket]."

A few weeks later, Brother Gilbert, who had been *Royal Arch* since 1824 and, more recently, 33rd degree of the Scottish rite, was to be nominated a member of the Supreme Council of France, the crowning of a masonic career of more than half a century and evidence of the importance which the society attached to his activities.

Chapter 28



UMBRELLA UNDER THE TRICOLOUR FLAG

It is rarely that a man realizes the dreams of his youth in time. If the realization be achieved during maturity, before the fifties which euphemists call "middle life", then, indeed, it can be enjoyed. After that it is too late: from the grave which a man sees all too close to him there issues a lurid light which clearly reveals the insignificance of the things of this world. But, despite the calendar, La Fayette was to remain a child—a big child, until the end; or rather an old young man, the youth who at twenty chartered *La Victoire*.

His faculty for admiration and enthusiasm was as great as ever, and since, during the three days, the massacring, wrecking and burning were done with a certain degree of moderation, he could, without provoking responses of an embarrassing righteousness, boast of the "courage, intelligence and magnanimity of the people of Paris", to whom he dealt out certificates of "civism" by the armful. Thureau-Dangin estimates the number of requests for recognition as "July Combattants" (self-styled), which were endorsed by him at this period, at seventy thousand. It was a service of courtesy which the "admirable" people recompensed by rising to their feet whenever, at the *Opéra*, the singer Nourrit came to that verse of *La Parisienne* which was dedicated to him,

*Pour briser ces masses profondes
Qui conduit nos drapeaux sanglants?
C'est la Liberté des Deux Mondes!
C'est La Fayette en cheveux blancs!*

True, those who saw him at the Hôtel de Ville at the time might have noticed that its chief was wearing a wig of reddish

tinge, the original shade of his hair: another of the sins of poetic licence. Later, Casimir Delavigne, the improviser of this new national march, wrote a poem entitled *Une Semaine de Paris*, in which the Hero of Two Worlds again had his own stanza:

*Entourons-le d'amour! Français, Américains,
De baisers et de pleurs couvrons ses vieilles mains!*

(Let us surround him with love! Frenchmen, Americans,
Let us cover his old hands with kisses and tears.)

It would have been possible to remind him that the triumph of the insurrection was chiefly due to Charles X's weakness and his defenders' negligence. But he was too busy enjoying "the delightful sensation of the multitude's smile", too occupied by the spectacle of the tricolour flag, the reappearance of which all about him gave him "the joy of a child". To an anonymous correspondent he wrote, on August 12, "For the rest, I have done as my conscience bade me do, and if I have made a mistake, it was made in good faith." That, although it may be deplored, cannot be doubted.

He walked ever in his own footprints. As at the time of the Constituent Assembly, he was active in denouncing the trade in Negroes. (Later, when he was close to death, that was the subject of his last letter to Murray.) He spoke in favour of all those convicted for political offences since 1815, and against capital punishment; indeed, he kept up a constant oratorical activity in addition to his official duties. And there were banquets; one on August 15 given for him by the City of Paris; another on November 11, by the 7th Legion of the National Guard, at which Mathieu Dumas made a speech recalling Washington and the Federation of 1790. In his reply Gilbert contrived to quote a remark in very questionable taste which had fallen from Louis-Philippe in the course of a review at which he had been cheered: "That is worth more than anointing at Reims". And he concluded with a passing slash at the departed Bourbons: "The Restoration of 1814 took for its motto *Unite and forget*; but in proposing this toast to the 7th Legion, I shall say, for my part: *Unite and remember*."¹

The Chamber was about to debate the question as to who

¹ Literally, *Union et oubli* and *Union et souvenir*.—*Trans.*

were to receive the distinction of being buried in the Panthéon; La Fayette wanted the honour for Manuel, General Foy and, if possible the Four Sergeants of La Rochelle; he failed to win it for the latter. On November 26 he wrote to Joseph Bonaparte a profession of anti-Bonapartist faith in the form of an answer to a question which the ex-King of Spain must have asked himself, "Why was another family preferred to mine? Had La Fayette forgotten that three million votes had given recognition to the Napoleonic dynasty?"

"I owe it to your friendship", Gilbert wrote, "to hold back nothing of my views . . ." which views may be resumed briefly as follows: "Despotism is only tolerable under the Imperial system—which there can be no question of reinstating." And he went on to instance the domestic virtues of the Orléans family and the personal merits of its head: "He was called Bourbon and that is a vexatious name, but that very name was, more than yours, more than that of the republic, a guarantee against war. It did not prevent the statement and operation of the principle of the people's sovereignty, nor the putting of arms into the hands of two million citizens nominating their own officers, nor giving complete freedom to the Press and establishing popular institutions."

Two million armed citizens nominating their own officers! Gilbert was still in 1792! No doubt the armies of the Republic were in part recruited from the National Guard, but, paradoxically, he was seeing that army, so warlike, so formidable to the foreigner, as fighting a battle long since won, as directed against his old enemies, despotism and aristocracy. Charles X's Orders blinded him to the Europe of Metternich. And Metternich, when he learned of La Fayette's appointment to the command of the National Guard, did not conceal his anxiety. "There are", he said, "two noble stubborn men of whom we must be equally wary, although they are both men of honour and noble gentlemen: King Charles X and the *marquis* de La Fayette; your July 'days'¹ have overthrown the mad dictatorship² of the old King; you will soon have to attack the kingship (*royauté*) of M. de La Fayette; more 'days' will be necessary, and only

¹ "journées" in the sense of "days of crisis and riot", of course.—*Trans.*

² Possibly only "foolish dictatorship".—*Trans.*

then will the Prince Lieutenant-General be really King of France."

Louis-Philippe was well aware that it is necessary to be strong in order to keep the peace; his confidence in the ability of the citizen militia to defend the frontiers was somewhat limited. On November 17 he was to call in Marshal Soult, which would annoy Gilbert, but meanwhile the General's prestige was necessary to him. If we wished to devise an oversimplified formula to give expression to the situation, we might evoke the citizen-King's legendary umbrella and, making it a symbol—the umbrella which was destined to preserve France from storms—say that the King was keeping it concealed under the tricolour flag which the chief of the citizen-army kept floating and flapping in the wind. A cartoon of the period shows the King, his crown in his hand, before La Fayette, who, with a protective gesture, is saying "Sire, you may put on your hat."

The King lent himself to the General's wishes with a good grace and flattered him to the best of his ability. His eldest son, the heir-apparent, had joined the National Guard Artillery. After inspection of the new citizen-army, the King's order of the day proclaimed that: "What he had just seen was infinitely superior to the battalions of 1792 which threw back the Prussians at Valmy." He deliberately ignored the signs of conflict, still latent, but which might become active from one day to the next, between the General and the Minister of the Interior: "Guizot", says A. Bardoux, "thought he was doing well when on August 18 he presented an order regularizing La Fayette's position, for the King's signature: it included a restriction—*while awaiting the promulgation of the law on the organization of the National Guards*. This reservation was the only sign of resistance."

But an important sign. It was a precaution deliberately taken by Louis-Philippe, the advance contrivance of an exit door for La Fayette when the King should be able to dispense with him. And meanwhile the King would not yield to La Fayette on points which he considered of vital importance, such as the return of political exiles, notably of Joseph Bonaparte, which the former prisoner of Olmütz was demanding.

In October, in view of the changes which Louis-Philippe was about to make in his first government, Gilbert was expressing

the hope that "the half-new administration would abandon the revolutionary pace". As a partisan of inexpensive government he wanted to see the Civil List relieved of certain expenses, despite "the general agreement on the need to keep the Parisians at work".¹ He gave only discreet expression to these and many other criticisms, in his own circle, and Louis-Philippe did not wish to appear aware of them. La Fayette's well-known mania for embracing everybody (he was, as we know, sometimes called *Père Biseur*) was, at bottom, no more than a gambit: he implied as much when he wrote: "I seek to make reparation for my public faults by all sorts of motions of personal friendship."

He brought a deputation of Philadelphians, come to congratulate the people of Paris on their victory, to the Hôtel de Ville. Laughing, he said, "I can, with almost the same pleasure, place myself among those presenting the address, or those receiving it." In the evening there was a banquet, and a toast was proposed: "To the emancipation of the American hemisphere, achieved within half a century!"—so had he spoken at Boston five years earlier. Now he recalled that "he had added that the toast in another fifty years would be to *Europe set free!* May that prediction be vindicated!"

The trial of Charles's ministers took place in December at the Luxembourg. Despite his seventy-three years La Fayette sat through it, determined to keep a close eye on the proceedings. The National Guard had prevented the mob from lynching them on their way from Vincennes to Paris, and had smuggled them in through a concealed doorway. But there was a constant coming and going of threatening crowds. Faithful to his method, the General did not command, he made speeches. "He persisted", says Broglie in his *Souvenirs*, "in *perorating* [sic] them in the name of humanity and respect for justice, entering, more or less, into their discontents about the way things were going." By this means he persuaded them to take bladders for lanterns and Louis-Philippe insisted on thanking him for this service, in writing, the same evening, for La Fayette had thus spared him the thing he was most afraid of: the shedding of blood for

¹ An extravagant Civil List meant work for artisans in the luxury trades, food trades, etc.—*Trans.*

political revenge. Judgment was given in the case of the accused ministers on December 21: they got off with a sentence of imprisonment for life; in the event, they were all released six years later.

But the King considered that La Fayette's political interference should end there. They might be of one mind in the matter of avoiding civil war, but they were by no means in agreement on foreign policy. Here, for example, is La Fayette on the subject of Poland: "What glory for our revolution and your reign, if the shame of Louis XV's last years and Bonaparte's perfidious indifference in regard to that unhappy country could be repaired!" But neither then nor later had the veteran of Valmy the slightest intention of marching off at the head of his troops to the Vistula.

Some days before the date of the above letter La Fayette had written another, this time to the United States Minister, Duponceau, on the subject of Belgium's independence: "The government is doing all it can to avoid war, rather too much perhaps, but should we be driven to it there will be a fine national upsurge with which people abroad will, I hope, sympathize." One feels that he would not have been sorry to be "driven to it"; 1830 would then be a reproduction of 1792, as 1825, his American apotheosis, enabled him to live 1781 over again. He had just received proposals which, however, he kept to himself for three months: an offer had been made to him, the offer of—a throne! Gilbert I of Belgium, to be crowned in Brussels! He said nothing about it until late in November, when he mentioned it in a confidential letter, saying that he had, of course, rejected it. He quoted Maurice de Saxe upon being offered, despite his somewhat whimsical spelling, a seat in the Académie Française: "It would suit me like a ring would suit a cat." Only, the victor of Fontenoy spelled *bague*, *bage*.

December 24, 1830—twenty-third anniversary of his wife's death. That Christmas Eve La Fayette issued an optimistic order of the day to the National Guard: "The critical period, the advertised date on which all plans for disorder were to come to a head, has happily been got over. . . . *Everything has been done for public order. Our reward is the hope that everything is going to*

be done for liberty." This text appeared in the *Moniteur* with an official note declaring, in the government's name, that no promise had been given. It was a repudiation, at least a disavowal of La Fayette. He was credited with tendentious talk: the Ministry must be reformed on more liberal lines; the Chamber of Peers to be abolished and replaced by an elected Senate; the franchise to be extended to all citizens who paid taxes. The slogans touching his situation in 1791 were heard once again—Mayor of the Palace, Lord Protector.

The protector was protecting, for the most part, foreign rebels. "Proscrits" who arrived at La Grange with empty pockets left it provided with subsidies. Not to be outdone, Louis-Philippe liberated the Restoration's political prisoners and received them in audience. "Presented by an accomplice", said La Fayette, who was their sponsor. These mutual courtesies were very much on the surface. Had not the King been heard to murmur, in the privacy of his own apartments, "This man is a scourge; he must be struck down"?

Nor was that to be long delayed.

The Committee of the Chamber proposed a measure prohibiting any formation command of the National Guard above the *Commune* level.¹ This was a tacit abolition of the rank of commanding general. There was a prolonged debate and Gilbert's friends tried in vain to win a respite. La Fayette was, in future, to be no more than "honorary" commander. Upon learning this he immediately sent in his resignation.

Disagreement with the King became sharper. Louis-Philippe began ignoring Hôtel de Ville policies, although he knew that Gilbert was strongly attached to them. "That", Gilbert said, "is what the Court cannot forgive me." The Court! Memories of Bouillé, Castries and Mirabeau, above all of Marie-Antoinette, were haunting him. He was accused, or believed himself accused, of "having contrived the December riot, of having exaggerated its danger in the eyes of the King, in order that his merit in dominating it should seem the greater". By and large he was becoming troublesome, and was making a virtue of it. While remaining perfectly friendly towards the royal family, he would

¹ i.e., the National Guard of a *Commune* would be the largest single body under any one officer.—*Trans.*

make no concessions whatever. Despite prayers and objurcations, he refused to remain at the head of the National Guard as "honorary" Commander. If he was to go, he would go at once, and if that caused trouble, so much the worse. "Do you suppose", he wrote, "that Marshal Soult would degrade himself to leading one of the divisions of an army whose Command-in-Chief had been taken away from him?"

Louis-Philippe's letter of regret seemed moist with crocodile tears. Not wishing to appear to accept the General's resignation with too much alacrity, he had the idea of getting Laffitte to take a hand, for a sort of clarification of the debate in the Chamber which had led to the abolition of Gilbert's command. La Fayette was not to be deceived. His line of conduct remained rigid until the end. Freed from the servitude, "albeit the most honourable", entailed by an official function, the aged *Kayewla* was about to return to opposition. His successor at the head of the Paris Legions was to be General Mouton, *comte de Lobau*, who had distinguished himself at Wagram and was much more knowledgeable in the manipulation of cannon than of his tongue.

Chapter 29



THE TWILIGHT OF A 1789 VETERAN

THUS did Louis-Philippe "tend", as Hanotaux observes, "to disengage himself little by little from his compromising origins"; and La Fayette's lot, with due allowance made for differences, resembled that of Warwick the king-maker, cast down by the man he had placed upon the throne. Dupont de l'Eure, Minister of Justice and the General's friend, refused to keep his place in the Council of Ministers at the end of 1830.

The opposition was composed of republicans and legitimists. There were two great parties which could not come to terms: that of the *Movement*, hostile to the treaties of 1815 and desirous of wide reforms, led by La Fayette, Laffitte and Odilon Barrot; and that of the *Resistance*, whose aim was a policy of the *golden mean*, the *juste milieu*, and whose principal exponents were Guizot, the *duc de Broglie* and Casimir Périer.

On February 20, 1831, La Fayette attacked the government: "Refusing to allow the commons to elect their magistrates¹ as in America, England, several parts of Germany and even in Spain: exclusion of two-thirds of the citizens in the appointment of municipal councillors—these are not republican institutions. . . . It is aristocracy, gentlemen. . . . The National Guard is the people; the people is ourselves. We hear much of moderation and *juste milieu*: I myself have friends who are not merely impregnated, but crazy with moderation. The real moderation consists in seeking that which is true, that which is just, and firmly willing it."

The crazy were to be found, rather, among those who, with as pretext a memorial service to the *duc de Berry* at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, had looted that church on February 14

¹ In the sense of "legislators", not judges.—*Trans.*

and, on the following day, another, Notre-Dame-de-Bonne-Nouvelle. An anti-religious wave was rising, stirred up by revolutionary elements. The movement spread, even in the provinces. La Fayette made it a point of honour to state, from the tribune, on February 23, that freedom of worship was a sacred principle. At the same time he approved the removal of the lilies from the State Seal, and from the ceiling of the Chamber of Deputies, a sly gesture on the part of a government frightened by the disturbances.

An open opponent of the 1815 treaties and those of the Holy Alliance, Gilbert was one of the principal leaders of the policy of non-intervention; an equivocal term, for it meant simply non-intervention by the contracting powers against irredentist movements which might alter the map of Europe. But this policy was supported by those whose idea was, on the contrary, to intervene everywhere in favour of insurgent movements. Thus, La Fayette became Poland's champion. In February 1831 a delegate from that country came to offer him the title of *First Grenadier of the Warsaw National Guard*. In March he attended a banquet given by the delegates, putting on for the occasion the uniform of which he was so proud. At about the same time he was writing to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to get permission to bring into France arms bought in England for the Poles. He sent subsidies to the insurgents, himself subscribing twenty thousand francs.¹ Did all this mean that he wanted armed intervention? Perhaps he wanted no more than energetic action against the policy of "peace at any price". To his constituents at Meaux he said in his manifesto, "Pusillanimity can only embolden malevolence and encourage invasion."

The champion of oppressed nations could pride himself on the support given to Belgium. It is a matter of history that in February 1831 Louis-Philippe, fearing war, refused the crown offered to his son, the *duc* de Nemours, who had been elected by the Congress. In vain did La Fayette appeal to Palmerston, equally favourable to Belgium. "And Poland," he wrote, "what shall we do for her?" His letter remained unanswered. The British Government was no more inclined than the French King to be involved in conflicts which might end in war. The revolu-

¹ Ponteil Lecture: *La Fayette et la Pologne*.

tion of 1830 was contagious, provoking disturbances all over Europe. In the Romagna the people rose against the Papal State authorities, and the Austrians, intervening, occupied Bologna. Laffitte wanted to take action but was prevented by the King, who was unwilling to become involved in difficulties with Vienna. Although Laffitte was President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), he was kept in ignorance of notes and dispatches relating to foreign policy and, on the grounds that he no longer enjoyed the Sovereign's confidence, resigned on March 9.

On the 13th Casimir Périer formed a new government. Like Laffitte a banker, he was energetic and liberal; he was connected with La Fayette, whose son had married one of Périer's nieces. Nevertheless the General's opposition, despite his courtesy in debate, remained perfectly firm.

A bill passed on March 25 reorganized the National Guard. In principle all citizens were now bound to serve in it; but the obligation to be registered as a taxpayer and for each man to equip himself at his own expense made the corps a middle-class militia. The Legions elected their own officers, excepting their colonels, who were chosen by the King.

At the same time the franchise was extended, but very parsimoniously, the new law adding only eighty thousand voters to the former total of one hundred and ten thousand.¹

In regard to the country's relations with foreign powers Casimir Périer made his position perfectly clear in a speech in the Chamber, addressing himself to La Fayette, "French blood belongs only to France." On April 12, Guizot made Poland's tireless defender, who had been speaking ever more frequently on the subject, much the same answer. La Fayette, while regretting that France had declared war in 1792 instead of waiting for her enemies to do it and put themselves further in the wrong, recalled that in 1824 Monroe had ensured the independence of the Spanish colonies by proclaiming that if any foreign Power meddled in the revolutions of those colonies the United States would regard such meddling as involving themselves. Guizot replied by recalling the intervention in Belgium, due to fear of intervention by some other Power. "I have not said

¹ The population of France was about twenty-five million.—*Trans.*

that we should never intervene, but we must have a direct interest."

La Fayette had foreseen changes in both foreign and domestic policy as early as March. General de Rumigny, Louis-Philippe's aide-de-camp, reports a conversation between the King and the General at the Palais-Royal in March 1831.

La Fayette: And what would you do without the support of my popularity?

The King: I shall not tell you what I should do if you left me.

La Fayette: I beg you, Sire, tell me.

The King: No, no.

La Fayette: I beg you tell me Sire, what your Majesty would do if I returned to La Grange?

The King: Since you make a point of knowing, General, why then, I should leave you there!

From which moment La Grange and the *hôtel* in the *rue d'Anjou* were to become the strongholds in which assaults on the government were planned. On May 31 Parliament was dissolved and Gilbert, obliged to stem the flood of his parliamentary oratory, set about energetically preparing for the election campaign, overcoming his grief at the loss, some days previously, of his old comrade of Olmütz days, Latour-Maubourg.

On June 15 he addressed a manifesto to his Meaux constituents; it was a long *exposé* of principles and policy. "The tricolour daydreams of a July veteran have become the law of France since 1830." He declared for freedom of worship. Concerning the franchise—he did not think "that a Frenchman needed to be paying two hundred francs in taxes¹ before he had the probity not to sell his vote and the good sense to choose an honest deputy of his neighbourhood". He took up a position as "a veteran of the people's cause whose self-dedication has earned him the honourable animadversions of all the despots and aristocracies of the world and the touching confidence of patriots in all countries". Several electoral colleges wished to nominate him; he opted for Meaux. In October he accepted office as Mayor of Courpalay from the prefect.

¹ Minimum qualification for the franchise—£10 (gold).—*Trans.*

Faithful to his promises, he fought against hereditary peerage¹ (which was, in fact, to be abolished) and approved of the intervention in Portugal against the absolutist Don Miguel, who had thrown a number of Frenchmen into prison; and later he was to be proud of the fact that his grandson took part in the expedition.

In 1830 there had been a rising in Poland provoked by a rumour that the tsar proposed to send the Polish army against Louis-Philippe. With no hope of foreign aid, Warsaw was forced to surrender after two days of fighting (September 6 and 7). Trouble broke out in Paris as soon as this news was received there, but disturbances were put down by the National Guard. La Fayette, however, speaking on the 20th and 21st, was still insisting, "Let us use the same language [to Russia] as we used to Prussia when we prevented her from going into Belgium. Only a show of energy will enable us to succeed." Even so the *First Grenadier of the Warsaw National Guard* realized that it was too late to have recourse to war.

Marshal Sebastiani having reminded the Chamber that the kingdom of Poland had been created by the Congress of Vienna, the French Government did make an effort on Poland's behalf by raising the question in St Petersburg, Berlin and Vienna. But on November 15 Metternich wrote to Count Apponyi, and, in giving an account of a visit he had received from Marshal Maison, come to intercede for Poland, said, "I sent him about his business." And when La Fayette warmly protested once again, Casimir Périer replied, although without convincing Gilbert, "One compromises nations, liberty and men of honour when one involves them in a struggle which they are not in a position to maintain" (February 21, 1832).

Age made no impression on the General's activity. He backed the Princess Belgiojoso, a voluntary exile in Paris, who was working for the Italian patriots. Malibran, the famous actress, had become possessed of a positive enthusiasm for the old leader of 1789. The General's status in both domestic and world politics

¹ Not identical with nobility. Members of the Chamber of Peers were all noblemen, but not all noblemen were peers, only a minority. La Fayette was, in this instance fighting against hereditary membership of that Chamber, not against hereditary nobility as such.—*Trans.*

made his *salon*, which Talleyrand did not disdain to frequent, a centre of excitement and disturbance. The public banquets at which he was a figure showed the extent to which he had become the centre of the ideas and forces which were fermenting throughout Europe. On May 30 he wrote, "You will have been told about our German and cosmopolitan dinner; I was deeply touched at hearing myself cheered in seven different languages, one of them being Hungarian."

He frequented Juliette Récamier's *salon*, where he often met and talked with Chateaubriand. The *marquis* and the *vicomte* quarrelled a good deal, but always politely. "I gave him to understand", Chateaubriand wrote, "that no man had been more taken in by our worthy Louis-Philippe, than himself."

Was Gilbert, the doctrinaire who, at bottom, always wanted the triumph of his ideas to be achieved without endangering public order, aware of the effect of his want of prudence? Among other things he had resorted to revolutionary language in the Chamber and referred to the sovereigns of friendly foreign Powers as "tyrants". The republicans and even the Bonapartists were fixing their hopes on him.

But the disturbances which followed the death of General Lamarque were about to demonstrate to what an extent he had been outdistanced by the men his ideas and activities had overstimulated.

In June 1832 Lamarque, like Casimir Périer, died of cholera. This scourge, which had been raging since March, had increased the general jumpiness in the capital. The dead man had been a friend of La Fayette and, like him, an implacable opponent of the Restoration. Gilbert was a pall-bearer at the funeral. The hearse was drawn by three hundred young men. The funeral procession, which included a number of revolutionary groups, made slow way through an immense crowd and passed across the *place Vendôme* in order to file past the column. At the *pont d'Austerlitz*, where the coffin was put down to await departure for Mont-de-Marsan, Lamarque's native place, a number of speeches were made. La Fayette said only a few words. After that a red flag, bearing the motto *Liberty or Death*, was produced. A part of the crowd was determined to take the coffin to the

Panthéon, and when the police tried to prevent them, a riot, which had been planned by the secret societies, broke out, and was rapidly swelled to serious proportions by republican malcontents and by German and Polish refugees. Barricades were thrown up and the fight became grim.

Upon seeing the red flag and hearing the first shots, La Fayette tried to regain his carriage but could not find it; he got into a fiacre with his son. Some young men took the horse from the shafts and tried to draw the General in triumph to the Hôtel de Ville and put him at the head of the insurrection. On refusing, he was threatened. Writing about it on June 9, he said: "There were a number of young madmen there who wanted to kill me in honour of the red flag; I am sorry for them with all my heart." And, later, he said, laughing, "It was not a bad idea. The rioters were saying, 'Would not that be a good death, which was a call to arms?' "

In the end he was rescued by the Dragoons and able to return home.

As soon as he was informed of the disturbances Louis-Philippe returned to Paris from Saint-Cloud and held an inspection of the National Guard at the Tuileries late in the afternoon. The following day he spent on horseback, with the police and troops who were trying to put down the rioters, the last of whom were crushed after a stand at the Cloître Saint-Merri.

Rigid in his hostility, the General set off for La Grange. He was not running away from the cholera, for the epidemic had broken out in Seine-et-Marne. In a neighbouring village of a few hundred inhabitants there were twenty-eight deaths in one day. The General had a physician brought from Paris. His daughter, Mme de Lasteyrie, a widow since 1827, George, and his two sons, showed the most noble devotion in nursing the sick and burying the dead.

Gilbert was not willing to maintain any kind of connection with the Government; he resigned his offices as Mayor of Courpalay and Councillor of the *Département*, but still continued as a deputy and as a member of the *Commune* Council, since he owed these places to popular election. He considered that the undertakings of the Charter were being disregarded. However, he asked Montalivet, Minister of the Interior, for authority to

offer the hospitality of his roof to Count Ostrowski, a Polish refugee: it was refused.

Béranger dedicated two songs to him: they were published for the benefit of the Polish Committee, and added nothing to their author's reputation.

*Le Polonais, de son shako civique
Ceint votre front, ce front que, tant de fois,
Olmütz, Paris, l'Europe et l'Amérique
Ont vu si calme intimider les rois.
Lorsque je chante honneur, gloire, souffrance,
Si dans les coeurs ma voix trouve un écho,
Pour recevoir l'obole de la France
Tendez votre Shako!*

As under the Restoration, republicans and Bonapartists drew closer together in their opposition to the July regime. Thureau-Dangin (*Histoire de la monarchie de Juillet*) says that Prince Louis-Napoleon, in his *Réveries politiques*, stated that he had "republican principles" and was indignant with "those who had dishonoured the splendid July monarchy". The same author points out that Lieutenant Laity, in his pamphlet dealing with the Prince's attempted *coup* at Strasbourg (published 1838), dates a meeting which La Fayette had sought with the Pretender, in 1833. In the course of this meeting he urged him to return to France. Octave Aubry seems to have believed that the meeting took place at Arenenberg in 1832: the General is supposed to have said, "I repent of what I helped to do in 1830. Consequently I invite you to seize the first opportunity of coming to France. The Government will not be able to maintain itself in power. Dare—and I will help you." A weathercock!—so will he be called by those who remember his hostility to the Empire; but a weathercock which could be turned only by the wind of liberty.

On October 11, Soult formed a conservative coalition government, with the *duc* de Broglie and Guizot. After the Paris troubles, the *duchesse* de Berry's abortive attempt at a rising in Vendée, and external difficulties, the opposition was disabled. The country wanted peace and quiet. Chateaubriand had lost heart; La Fayette, although greatly aged, was still helping Polish refugees. On March 11 he went to the tribune to attack

the special (and exceptional) laws aimed against them and demanded to know how it was that the *Moniteur*, the official newspaper, "has been transformed into a branch of the Russian ambassador's Chancellery for the purpose of promulgating and registering the confiscations applied against our friends". He accused the Government of involving itself "in a kind of comradeship with despotic Governments". He was angry because Lelewel, a member of Prince Czartoryski's shadow cabinet, had been arrested at La Grange, where he had obtained permission to reside on condition that he did not leave it. The government claimed that Lelewel had paid several visits to Paris: La Fayette denied it and protested, "Nothing like it ever happened during the fifteen years of the Restoration." d'Argout, Minister of the Interior, gave way, said that there had been a misunderstanding, and repudiated the prefect of police. Nevertheless, at the end of November the Pole Niemcewicz, speaking of a banquet at the *rue d'Anjou* at which more than two hundred of his fellow-countrymen had been present, said of La Fayette, "Age has weakened his intelligence; he wants to retain his old popularity, but he cannot find effective methods and his prestige is everywhere much shaken."

Gilbert spent the spring and summer in the country, but with frequent visits to Paris, and he still kept up a large correspondence. He had founded an Agricultural Society and was very proud of having four times won awards at the Rosoy Agricultural Show. "He had turned his château into a veritable museum," says Leopold Olivier, who made a special study of Gilbert's life in Seine-et-Marne, "filled with historic souvenirs, such as the gifts he received from Washington." It is still possible to see in the same setting the large portrait which Ary Scheffer painted of La Fayette in 1825, after his return from America. His sister-in-law, Mme de Montagu, who had a warm affection for him, wrote to one of her friends in 1821: "In his family relationships he is perfect and of the best council. But his moral blunders and frenzy for liberty are a cross for me." She was curious and enquired about the pose which he had adopted for Scheffer's painting, expecting that he would have been done holding a copy of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* in his hand.

"But, as you see, my hand is in my pocket," he said smiling, "which is better, my dear sister, than having it in other people's."

The General, is, in fact, depicted in bourgeois attire, and the portrait, the only one of himself which he considered at all like him, has an air of easy good-nature.

But the old fighter was to get no rest. On June 13 he again spoke in the Chamber, calling for improvements in the July 4 (1831) treaty with the United States. He proclaimed himself a "Good American", but added, "nobody can say I have been a bad Frenchman". In January 1834 he was making another fervent speech against the special laws against political refugees, and in favour of Poland, "the heroic advance guard of Europe".

A deputy, Dulong, had taunted General Bugeaud with having been the *duchesse* de Berry's gaoler in 1831, and a duel resulted. Dulong was killed by a pistol shot through the forehead. La Fayette insisted upon being one of the Chamber's representatives at the funeral, and having followed the bier on foot from the *rue* de Castiglione to the Père-Lachaise, in midwinter (February 1), he caught cold and had to take to his bed.

He was not to leave it again excepting for one day, May 19, when he was taken for a carriage drive: it was his last.

At the end of 1832 a political association had been founded calling itself the *Société des Droits de l'Homme*—The Society of the Rights of Man. The names given to its several sections are sufficient in themselves to define its spirit: *Robespierre*, *Marat*, *Babeuf*, *War-on-the-châteaux*, *21 January*, etc. This revolutionary association, whose leaders included Kersausie and Godefroy Cavaignac, had already fomented disturbances, and Soult's government was determined to prevent them from repeating the performance: after two weeks of debating he got a bill through the Chamber (March 25) aimed at unauthorized associations.

La Fayette, who had never considered the revolution indivisible, published a manifesto in *La Tribune* in October 1833 calling the doctrines of the new society and others like it "an aping of 1793" and "arbitrary utopias, knowing full well of the dangers".

On November 23 he wrote to a friend, "As an associate of Washington, Franklin and Jefferson, I am not tempted, after nearly sixty years, to change my parish in order to sit under Robespierre, Saint-Just and Marat."

"I am not", he was sometimes heard to say "a statesman." It will not do to take this for an example of humility, however, for he added, "That is, ready to combine with anybody or adopt any cause."

The *Société des Droits de l'Homme* having been prosecuted, several other societies decided to resist the new law, whereby infractions were tried before the *Tribunaux Correctionnels* and acts against the safety of the State before the Court of Peers. Among these societies was one called *l'Union de Juillet*, of which La Fayette was president; but Gilbert was at home and bedridden, and it was the *Droits de l'Homme* which planned the revolt. It had ramifications in the provinces, notably in Lyon, where the *Mutualists* rose on April 9. It took the army four days to get the upper hand of them.

As soon as the news of this repression reached Paris, rioting broke out on the 13th and, despite the arrest of Kersausie, immediately became bloody. Thiers, on horseback, accompanied the generals about the city. There was one deplorable incident: some soldiers, exasperated at seeing their officer hit by a bullet fired from a building, exterminated all its inhabitants. The "massacre of the *rue Transnonain*", which raised the fury of the extremists to fever pitch, nevertheless put an end to the riots, which had been dealt with energetically by the National Guard and the regular army. The number of killed does not seem to have been great: Thureau-Dangin gives a figure of twelve on each side.

Poor Gilbert! There he was, bedridden, and although he could not hear the firing, he was kept informed of events. On April 14 he wrote to Fenimore Cooper to give him an account of the disturbances and to add, anxiously: "It seems they are preparing anti-liberal measures." A little later, after being four months in his room, his doctor allowed him to go for a drive. But a storm came up and he was brought back icy cold. The following night he could no longer speak. His son helped him to raise to his lips the locket which he always wore on a

chain about his neck: it contained a miniature of the wife he had loved so much, and a lock of her hair.

He died on May 20, 1834, at about four o'clock in the morning and in his seventy-seventh year.

The Government gave him an official funeral, with a great parade of troops. Three thousand National Guards, under the orders of Marshal the *comte* de Lobau, were there to do honour to the mortal remains of their former General. Reserve regiments had been drafted in. (A few days later Buloz, in his *Revue des Deux-Mondes* chronicle, wrote: "So large a muster of military seemed designed less to honour the dead than to cut the throats of the living.") The funeral service was held at the church of l'Assomption. The crowd all along the route of the procession was very dense, but there were no disturbances; an attempt at a demonstration by the pupils of the *Écoles* was immediately stopped by the police.

Veterans of the Polish revolutionary struggle bore the coffin to the small Picpus cemetery where so many victims of the Revolution were buried. Only his nearest kin and a few friends were allowed to enter it. The General had refused to be buried in the Panthéon, and his remains rest under a large stone beside Adrienne's. The stone bears no inscription but his name and the words *Lieutenant-général, membre de la Chambre des Députés*. It had been his wish to be buried in the earth which he had brought from America in 1825; it was done, but not without provoking some malevolent comments at a later date.

In the United States feeling was intense. Congress ordered thirty days of national mourning and summoned all citizens to join in it. A funeral eulogium was delivered by the President; and La Fayette received the same military honours as had been paid to Washington.

At the news of his death the men imprisoned in *La Force* lit their lamps in celebration; for, painful though it be to face the fact, it is the fate of those who persist, despite everything, in remaining moderates, to arouse hostility, and even hatred, in the hearts of those who would have wished to enrol them in their own parties. Said his enemies, "*Vive La Fayette mort!*" Long live La Fayette—dead.

In his writings La Fayette accuses Bonaparte "of having worked at the building of himself". Had he been more ambitious Gilbert could, on several occasions, have seized power. Instead he had the privilege, if privilege it be, of remaining until his death and long after it an object of the most violent political passions. "A statue in search of a pedestal," Laffitte had said. The statue multiplied and became many in the United States. The one which, erected by an American subscription, is to be seen in Paris shows him on horseback and in general's uniform.

It is thus that the Hero of Two Worlds still continues to "gallop through future centuries", to borrow the words of that nameless prophet in the crowd at the *Fédération*.

Neither Vigny, nor Lamartine, nor Hugo seem to have tuned their lyre to hymn La Fayette. But on the occasion of his obsequies Mme Amable Tastu, a poetess to whom one of the authors has devoted a study,¹ wrote a *pièce de circonstance* somewhat weak, indeed, in inspiration, yet fair enough in its evocation of the man and his work; no former biographer of La Fayette appears to have mentioned it. It is entitled,

To the Youth of France

Look, look upon the honour done this dead,
Such that a prince's corpse would hope in vain,
Where young America and old Poland lead,
Hands joined, the funeral train.

The Panthéon had held him; his own ban
Denied it. Moving the world, what was his art?
The brush of David or great Voltaire's pen?
The sword of Bonaparte?

No, but his voice, his arm, his wealth, his life
To his convictions harnessed by his mind
Serving his youth's own gods in conjoint strife
Nor ever from that service once declined.

¹ E. A. Babeau, *Mme Tastu*.

The translation, necessarily free, conveys the sense and manner. Here is the original:

*Regardez, regardez ce cortège civique
Et tel qu'un mort royal l'espérerait en vain,
Ou la vieille Polonge et la jeune Amérique
Marchent en se donnant la main.*

*Ceuli que son voeu seul dérobe au Panthéon
Avait-il manié pour émouvoir la terre
Le pinceau de David, la plume de Voltaire,
Le glaive de Napoléon?*

*Non, mais sa voix, son bras, sa voeu et sa richesse
A ses convictions ensemble devoués,
Ont servi de concert les dieux de sa jeunesse
Sans que nul de ses jours les ait désavoués.*

Sainte-Beuve, in his *Portraits Historiques*, when analysing La Fayette's *Mémoires*, has some interesting things to say concerning the notes on events which the General left us:

"What a man writes, the most judicious and subtle words he speaks in the intervals of action, do not always signify; from the qualities of the historical writer, of the man passing judgment on the action in which he has just taken part, one could not draw conclusions as to the qualities of this man when in action and playing a part. There is here an essential difference and it is this which should make us, mere men of letters, very humble and circumspect, when, by our own lights, we are judging men of action." It is sound advice. Since it is more or less impossible to shed one's personal prejudices concerning events whose repercussions are still being felt in our own time, it is desirable that he who judges in tranquillity should not express himself in too downright a fashion concerning the acts of those who bore the heat and burden of the day.

A. Bardoux presents La Fayette as a paladin dedicated to the service of his Lady, Liberty; Thureau-Dangin sees in him "the need, above all, for praise. He himself said that his reputation was a part of his happiness without which he could not live, which does him honour even though he sometimes sought it where he was in danger of compromising it."

On the other hand, no abuse of him, no insult, was too violent for the extremist parties, revolutionaries on one side, *émigrés* and "ultras" on the other. For example, the *marquis* de Frénilly (Louis XVIII called him de *Frénésie*) writes: "La Fayette did, in a way, mitigate the horrors of the Revolution by making it, predominantly, ridiculous"; while Chateaubriand, less violent but more shrewdly malicious, said that "his blindness had to serve him in lieu of genius".

Perhaps only the *duchesse* d'Angoulême did full justice to his attempts to save Louis XVI and his family in 1792: "Had my mother been able to overcome her prejudice against M. de La Fayette, if they had had more confidence in him, my unhappy parents would be still alive."

On the day after his death Buloz pointed out in the *Revue des Deux-Mondes* (May 31, 1834) that Lermnier compared La Fayette to Louis XIV, the *Roi-Soleil* standing for the monarchy, La Fayette for the people. The judgment is too absolute. For while he had, as he said, a *dog-like hunger* for popularity, he was invariably honest and sincere and never ceased from the pursuit of an ideal to which he hoped to convert all his countrymen.

Writing of him in her *Considérations sur la Révolution Française*, Mme de Staël says: "His confidence in the triumph of liberty is the same as that of a pious man in the life hereafter." In his manifesto to his constituents, a veritable profession of faith, the General refers to his "religion of Liberty", words which should certainly be recalled on the final page of this study. In all his actions, under the different governments which he fought against or supported, he may be reproached with having often acted imprudently, with having misunderstood the realities of events and lost his control of them. But apart altogether from both the enthusiasm and the passionate criticism of which he was the object, he had one undeniable merit of being the founder of Franco-American friendship, three times sealed in the blood of both nations since 1777. Such was and will remain his most unspoiled title to fame.

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